



## Summary

### Main Features

#### NOTES

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) acknowledges and thanks the wide range of stakeholders who showed strong commitment and expertise in providing guidance to the ABS as it developed its statistical definition of homelessness. The contributions through formal submissions, comments at meetings and participation in expert groups provided invaluable information to help ABS understand the complexity of homelessness and guide how we can both collect relevant data (in Censuses and surveys) and analyse and report transparently on homelessness in Australia.

The ABS established the Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG) to advise the ABS on the development, collection, compilation, production and dissemination of robust statistics for use in analysing, understanding and reporting on homelessness in Australia. The ABS thanks all HSRG members past and present for their invaluable contributions, commitment and time in advising the ABS, representing their organisations and wider sector stakeholder views as well as communicating the aims and progress of the work towards an ABS statistical definition of homelessness.

The ABS particularly thanks HSRG co-chair Shelley Mallett (Hanover General Manager of Research and Service Development, and Honorary Senior Lecturer at Melbourne University) for her expert knowledge in the field, strong facilitation skills, and dedication in representing the needs of members in finalising the development of both an ABS homelessness definition and the methods for estimating homelessness.

The ABS also acknowledges the contributions from homelessness services organisations and their staff, some of whom serve on HSRG, and many participated in public meetings to discuss the ABS statistical developments and gave their views in submissions. Many more provided their strong support for the enumeration of homeless people in the 2011 Census.

HSRG members include Professor Chris Chamberlain (Centre for Applied Social Research, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University); Associate Professor David MacKenzie (Swinburne University); Sarah Kahn (Council to Homeless Persons); Travis Gilbert (Homelessness Australia); Zoe Probyn (North West Homelessness Network); Mark Bagshaw (South Australian Department for Communities and Social Inclusion); Geoff Neideck and Vicki Bennett (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare); representatives from Housing NSW (NSW Family and Community Services); Kathryn Mandla, Arati Waldegrave, Leon Donovan, Barbara Beatty and Edmond Hsu (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs); Dr Guy Johnson (Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute); Maria Leebeek (Queensland Youth Housing Coalition); Dr Jill White and Anthea Bill (Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services); Eleri Morgan-Thomas (Mission Australia); Dr Jennie Gray and Helen Hemsley (Anglicare, WA); Kedy Kristal (Patricia Giles Centre); Lindy Edwards (Sera's Women's Shelter/WESNET); and Katherine Blackwell and Helen Innes (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations).

The ABS also benefited from the views of the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness as well as other key stakeholders in homelessness policy and service delivery.

A special acknowledgement is extended to HSRG members Professor Chris Chamberlain and Associate Professor David MacKenzie for their ground breaking work in establishing a world first approach to the use of Census data in estimation of the homelessness population.

#### INQUIRIES

For further information about this publication, contact Bob McColl on Canberra (02) 6252 6233

## Homelessness Statistics - Q&A and Factsheets

#### HOMELESSNESS STATISTICS

The ABS has developed a statistical definition of homelessness. Details of the definition can be found in Information Paper:

A Statistical Definition of Homelessness (cat. no. 4922.0).

The ABS has also finalised the methodology for estimating homelessness using data from the Census of Population and Housing. Details of the methodology will be found in **Information Paper - Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing** (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001) and will be published on **Wednesday 5 September 2012**.

Below are commonly asked questions relating to homelessness statistics and answers to these questions.

The ABS has also prepared Factsheets on key areas of interest relating to homeless:

- [Homelessness - in concept and in some measurement contexts](#)
- [Youth homelessness](#)
- [Transitional Housing](#)
- [Overcrowding](#)
- [Domestic and Family violence](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness](#)

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### WHAT IS THE ABS' NEW DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS?

The ABS has never before had a definition of homelessness.

In brief, the ABS statistical definition is that:

When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

The ABS definition of homelessness is informed by an understanding of homelessness as 'home'lessness, not rooflessness. It emphasises the core elements of 'home' in Anglo American and European interpretations of the meaning of home as identified in research evidence (Mallett, 2004). These elements may include: a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety, and the ability to control living space. Homelessness is therefore a lack of one or more of the elements that represent 'home'.

The definition has been constructed from a conceptual framework centred around the following elements:

- Adequacy of the dwelling;
- Security of tenure in the dwelling; and
- Control of, and access to space for social relations.

See Information Paper: A Statistical Definition of Homelessness (cat. no. 4922.0) for more information on the ABS' definition of homelessness.

### WHY DID THE ABS DEVELOP A DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS?

The ABS has never before had a definition of homelessness. However, ABS did recognise the importance of homelessness for Australian governments and society more generally, and in 2009 commenced development of modules for the collection of past periods of homelessness in its household surveys. This development, coupled with the potential to develop official estimates of homelessness using data from the Census of Population and Housing, required a conceptual definition of homelessness to underpin operationalisation of the measurement of homelessness on a broadly consistent basis across these emerging datasets. Not only do comparable quality statistics, over time and across data sources, require a clear conceptual framework and definition to underpin their operationalisation in multiple collections, but the conceptual clarity guides ongoing fine tuning of those datasets to better serve that measurement purpose.

The ABS definition of homelessness was developed in consultation with the ABS' Homelessness Statistics Reference Group. Future ABS surveys will adopt this definition.

[Back to top](#)

### WHY DIDN'T THE ABS USE CHAMBERLAIN AND MACKENZIE'S 'CULTURAL' DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS?

Key international and national definitions of homelessness (including Chamberlain and MacKenzie's 'cultural' definition) must demonstrate that a rigorous, evidence informed, process had been undertaken to develop the conceptual framework /definition with core elements underpinning it. The purpose of the definition is to advise on the conceptual elements of a definition that could be operationalised across a range of datasets, and not just be a summary method of developing a view of homelessness from the data currently collected currently in the Census of Population and Housing. There has been no empirical validation of the 'cultural definition' in terms of its assumptions about a minimum shared community standard. Moreover, views have evolved over the past 20 years or so, suggesting that this standard is historically contingent.

The new ABS definition of homelessness was tested against the categorisation of a large list of living situations and addresses much of the ambiguity in the operationalisation of Chamberlain and MacKenzie's 'cultural' definition.

[Back to top](#)

## WHAT PROCESS DID THE ABS GO THROUGH TO DEVELOP THEIR DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS?

The ABS established the Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG) to advise the ABS on the development, collection, compilation, production and dissemination of robust statistics for use in analysing, understanding and reporting on homelessness in Australia. HSRG is made up of key stakeholders from state and federal governments, peak bodies, service providers and researchers. The ABS convened a HSRG sub-group to advise HSRG and ABS on the key elements of a conceptual framework that could underpin the ABS definition of homelessness for use in compiling official statistics in Australia. The work of the definition sub-group was framed by tight timelines linked to specified ABS release dates for ABS official estimates of homelessness from the 2001, 2006 and 2011 Censuses of Population and Housing. Because of the tight timelines the work of the sub-group was divided into two phases. The first phase, covered in the Information Paper: A Statistical Definition of Homelessness (cat. no. 4922.0), does not address any specific cultural definition issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples understandings of homelessness. The second phase, relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness, commenced in August 2012.

The Definition subgroup first met in December 2011. To complete its first phase work it met on eight occasions, including three all day face to face meetings and five teleconferences between December 2011 and June 2012.

The subgroup developed its thinking about the key elements of the definition through both a top down and a bottom up approach including:

- consideration of national and international statistical definitions of homelessness (summarised in a separate paper on the ABS statistical definition of homelessness); and
- review and analysis of over 300 housing and personal circumstances in Australia to test whether homelessness, as understood by researchers, service practitioners and policy and program officers, could be mapped to a basic set of key elements.

At key points in this process subgroup members were invited to seek broader stakeholder feedback about the various living situations under review and the implications for key elements of a homelessness definition.

Following critical analysis of the definitions and living situations ABS articulated a range of possible elements to support a definition of homelessness. Members discussed the pros and cons of these elements, and refined the elements over time. While consensus was not reached in the sub-group, the ABS definition largely reflects a majority view of members of the sub-group.

[Back to top](#)

## HOW WILL THE ABS USE THIS NEW DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS?

The ABS definition of homelessness will be used to produce statistics on homelessness from a range of ABS collections. This includes prevalence estimates of homelessness from the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing, and from household surveys such as the General Social Survey, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Personal Safety Survey, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, and other surveys, as appropriate.

This definition can also be used by other organisations to collect and output their statistics in line with the ABS definition and ABS statistical outputs.

[Back to top](#)

## WHEN WILL THE 2006 AND 2001 ESTIMATES OF HOMELESSNESS FROM THE CENSUS BE PUBLISHED?

The ABS will be publishing final official homeless estimates from the 2006 and 2001 Censuses on Tuesday 11 September 2012 in the publication: **Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness, 2006** (cat. no. 2049.0). Estimates from the 2011 Census will be published in November under the same catalogue number.

[Back to top](#)

## WHEN WILL THE 2011 ESTIMATES OF HOMELESSNESS FROM THE CENSUS BE PUBLISHED?

The ABS will be publishing estimates from the 2011 Census on Monday 12 November 2012 in the publication: **Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness, 2006** (cat. no. 2049.0). The methodology uses Census second release variables, which will be published on 30 October 2012.

The same ABS methodology will be used for the 2011 as the 2006 estimates, aside from any changes required due to the changes in estimation cut offs applied when considering income, mortgage and rent (see Key differences between methodology employed for estimating homelessness for different Census years - Income, mortgage and rent cut offs to be published in **Information Paper - Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing** (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001) for more details) and any changes that result from changes in the field procedures carried out in 2011. Any such changes will be outlined in the 2011 publication.

[Back to top](#)

## WHAT OTHER DATA CAN I USE TO HELP ME TO UNDERSTAND HOMELESSNESS?

The ABS will publish an Information Paper: Guide to Homelessness Statistics (cat. no. 4923.0) in November 2012 to assist users with analysing the multiple data sources available to obtain a more complete picture of homelessness. The guide will outline which parts of the homeless definition ABS collections can, or cannot capture.

In addition to prevalence estimates of homelessness from the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing, the ABS has collected previous experiences of homelessness from the 2010 General Social Survey (GSS), published in September 2011. In March 2012, the ABS released an article titled Life after homelessness in the publication Australian Social Trends (cat. no. 4102.0) drawing on those GSS results. The article examines a range of socio-economic indicators of those who had experienced at least one episode of homelessness in the 10 years prior to the survey, but were no longer homeless.

An improved homelessness module has also been included in the 2012 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. The ABS expects to also include this module, further developed, in the 2014 General Social Survey. The ABS will consider developing a culturally appropriate module for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey. The ABS will also be collecting experiences of homelessness for people who leave a violent partner through the Personal Safety Survey.

The ABS will also investigate using the 5% Statistical Longitudinal Census Dataset (SLCD) to undertake longitudinal analysis of the circumstances of those who have been identified as likely to be homeless. The circumstances of people identified as likely to be homeless on the 2011 SLCD can then be compared with their circumstances in 2006, and into the future it should be possible to report on repeat periods of homelessness and long term outcomes as seen in the SLCD. It will also be possible to compare these results, for those likely to be homeless, with the rest of the population.

There are also non-ABS sources of information about homelessness, such as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Specialist Homeless Services collection, and the FaHCSIA funded Melbourne Institute Study: **Journeys Home: Longitudinal Study of Factors Affecting Housing Stability**.

[Back to top](#)

## **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ENUMERATION AND ESTIMATION AND HOW DO THESE EFFECT ESTIMATING HOMELESSNESS FROM THE CENSUS?**

In summary, the main limitations with using Census data to estimate homelessness can be summarised as:

- under / over **estimation** - people were enumerated in the Census but the data collected about them is not sufficient to be certain about whether or not they were homeless on Census night;
- under-enumeration - people who were not enumerated in the Census.

Observing homeless people in any data collection is a challenge, and their homeless circumstance may mean that these people are not captured at all in datasets used to count people generally. And not all homeless people will be enumerated in data sets of those homeless people accessing particular services for the homeless. The 2010 ABS General Social Survey 2010 found that of those who had had an experience of homelessness in the last ten years and who were no longer homeless at the time of interview, only 40% had sought assistance of formal services. While data on people who access services are very important data sources for understanding people who access services, they cannot provide an estimate of the total number of homeless people at one point in time. Only the Census offers the opportunity to estimate for most people who were likely to have been homeless at one point in time.

However, there is an inherent imprecision in estimating homelessness using the Census of Population and Housing because the Census is not designed to classify people according to whether or not they were homeless on Census night. Variables collected in the Census that were designed for other purposes must be interpreted as proxies for likely homelessness. The ABS methodology includes in its homelessness estimates groups of people who, on balance, were most likely to have been homeless on Census night.

While it may be tempting to overestimate homelessness in some groups to compensate for both under-enumeration and likely under-estimation for some other groups, such an approach would result in estimates of characteristics that did not reflect those of the homeless population, including but not limited to their geographic spread. This may result in the misdirection of policy, funds and services. And while a balance between unavoidable under-estimation and deliberate over-estimation may result, this is unlikely. It is also very likely to be very different with each Census, destroying the capacity to monitor change over time. Recognising which groups of homeless people are underestimated in the Census, and using supplementary data sources to understand these groups, will both better address the needs of homeless people, and allow for assessments of change over time in the level of homelessness.

ABS recognises that some groups of people are more likely to be under enumerated in the Census. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to be both under enumerated and over-represented in the homeless population. ABS has developed strategies for each Census aimed at maximising the enumeration of Indigenous persons.

So called rough sleepers and people staying in supported accommodation for the homeless are also at risk of being under enumerated in the Census. The ABS develops a homeless enumeration strategy for each Census, and works with homeless service providers to maximise the enumeration of these groups on Census night.

The ABS Post Enumeration Survey (PES) is used to estimate for the under enumeration of the Australian population in the Census. However it only covers people in private dwellings at the time of the PES, and therefore will not capture homeless people living in non-private dwellings but who were missed on Census night.

[Back to top](#)

# Factsheet: Homelessness - in concept and in some measurement contexts

## FACTSHEET: Homelessness - in concept and in some measurement contexts

Definitions of homelessness are culturally and historically contingent. They range from limited objective measures which conflate homelessness with rooflessness to more equivocal subjective definitions founded on culturally and historically determined ideas of 'home'. The ABS definition of homelessness is informed by an understanding of homelessness as 'home'lessness, not rooflessness. It emphasises the core elements of 'home' in Anglo American and European interpretations of the meaning of home as identified in research evidence (Mallett, 2004). These elements include: a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety, and the ability to control living space. Homelessness is therefore a lack of one or more of the elements that represent 'home'.

Over the last decade there has been increasing international attention on the need for a consistent definition of homelessness, particularly in Europe. Governments, researchers, statisticians, policy makers and service providers alike have recognised that the development of an agreed definition for statistical purposes that allows for consistent measurement of the scope and scale of homeless both within countries but also across countries. In Europe this has led to the development of the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) definition (European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless, 2011). Closer to Australia, the ETHOS definition informed the development of the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness (Statistics New Zealand, 2009).

In Australia, while debate about definitions has occurred among academics, policy makers and service providers over the last decade or so, a loose consensus was achieved around the tri-partite cultural definition proposed by Professors Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2008) that spans from rooflessness to insecure and inadequate housing. This definition has informed the estimation undertaken by Chamberlain and MacKenzie of homelessness using Census and other data sources.

In 2008, following widespread discussion in Australia about the meaning and measurement of social inclusion and exclusion, the ABS recognised the need to develop robust and transparent homelessness statistics across a range of ABS datasets. This decision coincided with the release of the Federal Government White Paper on Homelessness (**The Road Home**) (FaHCSIA, 2008a), which highlighted homelessness as an important social issue in Australia and identified the need to "turn off the tap", "break the cycle" and arrest chronic homelessness.

Up until 2008, ABS had neither developed its own definition of homelessness nor adopted any other definition, and it did not provide official estimates of homelessness. However, ABS did support research undertaken by academics Professors Chamberlain and MacKenzie who estimated the numbers of homeless people in Australia using the 1996, 2001 and 2006 Censuses of Population and Housing (Chamberlain, 1999; Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, 2008). Their estimation work was underpinned by the cultural definition of homelessness developed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2008). The ABS would like to make special acknowledgement of Professor Chris Chamberlain and Associate Professor David MacKenzie for their ground breaking work in establishing a world first approach to the use of Census data in estimation of the homelessness population.

Following the decision to develop official ABS homelessness statistics, the ABS began developmental work in this area by first reviewing the methodology employed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie to estimate homelessness through the Census of Population and Housing. During this review (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, 2011a and 2011b) the ABS identified the need to develop a robust, defensible and evidence informed definition of homelessness for statistical purposes. The ABS began this work by reviewing key national (SAAP and Cultural) and international (ETHOS and NZ statistics) definitions.

A key outcome of the ABS review into the methodology for estimating homelessness from the Census, including the homelessness sector consultation that followed, was the establishment of the ABS Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG). The HSRG was established to provide advice to the ABS about the development of homelessness statistics. A definition sub-group of the HSRG was established to inform the work on the homelessness definition and a methodology sub-group of the HSRG was established to inform on the work on the methodology used to estimate homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing.

This move to producing official ABS statistics on homelessness represents an important development for the ABS and reflects commitment to improve the measurement of housing and homelessness in Australia. The ABS is working to improve the measurement across a range of ABS data sets. To date, the ABS has published information about people who have had a previous experience of homelessness from its 2010 General Social Survey, and will collect similar information in its 2012 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. The ABS proposes to continue to collect this information in its 2014 General Social Survey in addition to other surveys, as appropriate.

Because of the complexity of homelessness from a social policy and service delivery perspective, there are a wide range of views on what constitutes homelessness. While the ABS has benefitted from expert advice, there are areas where it was not possible to obtain agreement among all experts. In these circumstances, the ABS has balanced the views of different experts and decided, from a **statistical perspective**, what the appropriate treatment of these circumstances should be. It acknowledges that there will continue to be differences of view, and in producing statistics on homelessness, the ABS will be intending to present the information in a way that alternative views of homelessness can be constructed to suit particular purposes.

For more information on the definition of homelessness or the methodology for estimating homelessness from the Census see Information Paper - A Statistical Definition of Homelessness (cat. no. 4922.0) and Information Paper: Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001).

## Factsheet: Youth homelessness

### FACTSHEET: Youth homelessness

The ABS has previously identified in its publications: Discussion Paper: Methodological Review of Counting the Homeless, 2006 (cat. no. 2050.0.55.001) and Position Paper - ABS Review of Counting the Homeless Methodology, August 2011 (cat. no. 2050.0.55.002) that youth homeless will be underestimated from the Census.

For some youth (sometimes referred to as 12-18 years or 12-24 years) who are homeless and 'couch surfing', a usual residence may still be reported in the Census. Their homelessness is masked because their characteristics look no different to other youth who are not homeless but are simply visiting on Census night. A usual address may be reported for 'couch surfers' either because the young person doesn't want to disclose to the people they are staying with that they are unable to go home, or the person who fills out the Census form on behalf of the young person staying with them assumes that the youth will return to their home. Homeless youth will be underestimated within the group: 'Persons staying temporarily with other households'.

ABS has not yet been able to establish any reliable way, with existing data sources, of estimating homelessness among youth staying with other households and for whom a usual address is reported in the Census. Service providers and researchers have indicated that the estimates of homeless youth derivable from Census data do not concord with their knowledge about youth homelessness.

Guided by its Homelessness Statistics Reference Group, the ABS is continuing to undertake research and development to improve the estimation of homelessness, including youth homelessness. In particular, the ABS has been undertaking a quality study to inform the potential development of a nationally representative homeless school students survey.

Until a robust methodology is developed to measure the level of youth homelessness, ABS will focus on producing transparent, consistent and repeatable estimates that can be used to monitor change over time. Because the ABS methods are transparent, users can assess whether there is any evidence to suggest that the components of homelessness that cannot yet be estimated reliably are likely to be moving differently over time to those elements that can be measured.

For analysis on youth homelessness from the Census see the ABS publications: Discussion Paper: Methodological Review of Counting the Homeless, 2006 (cat. no. 2050.0.55.001) and Position Paper - ABS Review of Counting the Homeless Methodology, August 2011 (cat. no. 2050.0.55.002).

For more information on the definition of homelessness or the methodology for estimating homelessness from the Census see Information Paper - A Statistical Definition of Homelessness (cat. no. 4922.0) and Information Paper: Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001).

## Factsheet: Transitional Housing

### FACTSHEET: Transitional Housing

Long-term supported accommodation, often described as Transitional Housing Management (THM) Units, often provides some security of tenure, and the dwellings are adequate (including basic kitchen facilities and a bathroom) and the household has privacy and exclusive use of those basic facilities. The THMs that meet these levels of housing would, under the ABS statistical definition of homelessness, not be classified as homeless. However those THMs that lack one or more of these elements would be classified as homelessness accommodation.

Unfortunately, the lists of supported accommodation that the ABS obtained for the 2006 Census did not separately identify THMs from other crisis accommodation, nor report information about the elements of homelessness. Therefore all THMs are indistinguishably included in the broader estimate of 'Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless' in the Census and will be included in the estimates of homelessness. For 2011, the ABS did receive information from some jurisdictions about THM but did not obtain any of the requested information about the facilities or the tenures offered. The ABS is analysing the list information received for 2011 to consider ways in which it can better separately identify THMs from and other supported accommodation in future Censuses.

For more information on the definition of homelessness or the methodology for estimating homelessness from the Census see Information Paper - A Statistical Definition of Homelessness (cat. no. 4922.0) and Information Paper: Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001).

## Factsheet: Overcrowding

### FACTSHEET: Overcrowding

People living in crowded dwellings represent a continuum within the scope of those who are marginally housed. In the context of the elements developed for the ABS definition of homelessness, people living in severe overcrowding are considered to be homeless because they do not have control of, or access to space for social relations. In extremely

overcrowded dwellings inhabitants are generally unable to pursue social relations, or have personal (i.e. family or small group) living space, or maintain privacy, nor do different family / groups within the dwelling have exclusive access to kitchen facilities and a bathroom. In such circumstances, if people had accommodation alternatives it would be expected that they would have exercised them.

There are many situations of overcrowding which do not threaten the health and safety of the occupants. For example, the overcrowding may be slight, or for a short period of time. However, severe and sustained overcrowding can put the health and safety of the occupants at risk.

People living in severe overcrowding are considered to be in the sixth ABS homeless group. Severe crowding conditions are operationalised in the Census as living in a dwelling which requires 4 or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the people who usually live there, as defined by the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS).

The concept of crowding is based upon a comparison of the number of bedrooms in a dwelling with a series of household demographics such as the number of usual residents, their relationship to one another, their age and their sex.

Operationalisation using Census data, for overcrowding as homelessness at this severe level of 4 or more bedrooms is designed to prevent the misclassification of people as homeless who may choose to live together under some crowding to save money, to be close to family or for other reasons. In addition, it also takes account of the limitation of the Census household form which only seeks relationship information within the household in relation to 'person one', as well as child relationships to 'person 2'. This limitation of Census family coding results in misclassification of family relationships, particularly for large households with complex family relationships or households which contain multiple families, or where persons are temporarily absent. Households that look like crowded group households in the Census may actually include a number of couples. Under CNOS a single adult requires their own bedroom but a couple can share a bedroom, and the masking of relationships can inflate the crowding measure.

For persons living in other crowded dwellings, that is those usual residents living in dwellings reported in the Census where the dwelling requires 3 extra bedrooms to accommodate them according to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS). Under the operationalisation of the ABS definition they are not classified as homeless but are considered to be in marginal housing and may be at risk of homelessness. The ABS will present estimates of marginal housing from the Census, including persons living in other crowded dwelling along side estimates of homelessness.

For more information on the definition of homelessness or the methodology for estimating homelessness from the Census see Information Paper - A Statistical Definition of Homelessness (cat. no. 4922.0) and Information Paper: Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001).

## **Factsheet: Domestic and Family Violence**

### **FACTSHEET: Domestic and Family violence**

Domestic and family violence is a significant cause of homelessness and personal safety is a concern for people who are subject to, or fleeing domestic and family violence.

Under the ABS homelessness definition, a person displaced from their home due to domestic violence becomes homeless if they have a temporary living situation and do not have access to accommodation alternatives that are secure, safe and adequate (and the home in which they were subject to domestic violence is not considered a safe alternative accommodation to their homeless situation).

A person experiencing the violence who remains in their unsafe home with the perpetrator, could be considered to lack control of and access to social relations. However, assessing these situations in a measurement context is very difficult, and the ABS definition currently excludes such situations from its definition of homelessness and characterises their living situation as being precarious or unstable and being at risk of homelessness. ABS will report the available information on these living situations and continue to develop its statistical measurement in this area.

The ABS recognise the difficulties in both enumerating people who are displaced from their home due to domestic and/or family violence in the Census of Population and Housing, and in classifying all of those that are enumerated correctly as either homeless or not homeless on Census night. Those enumerated in supported accommodation for the homeless will be measured. Some who are in boarding houses, staying temporarily with other households, in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough, or staying in other lodgings such as hotels or motels on Census night and who report no usual address will be classified as homeless. However some will not be able to be distinguished from other people who were visitors on Census night.

Some people who are displaced due to domestic and family violence may not be enumerated in the Census. Out of fear they may not have themselves recorded on a Census form for the dwelling they are staying in. For those who are reported on a Census form as being away from home on Census night, they may be reluctant, for a number of reasons including stigma, to report having no usual address on Census night. Alternatively, they may have an expectation that they may be able to return to their home in the future and do not see themselves as not having a usual address. As a result they can not be distinguished from other people who were visiting on Census night and Census based estimates must be recognised as being an underestimate for this group.

The ABS have worked with its Homelessness Statistics Reference Group members to look to ways to both improve the

enumeration of these homeless people in the Census as well as developing alternative sources of information such as the Personal Safety Survey. In late 2013 the ABS will have data from the Personal Safety Survey on people who left a violent current or previous partner and whether they 'couch surfed', sleep rough, stayed in a shelter etc. This will provide an indication of what accommodation was used by people the last time they separated from their violent partner/s and will be an important new source of information about homelessness and domestic violence.

As part of the development for Census 2016, the ABS will consider how they can improve the enumeration of, and the identification as homeless of those who were fleeing domestic and/or family violence in the Census. However the ABS recognises the need to use other data sources to gain a more complete picture of homelessness.

For more information on the definition of homelessness or the methodology for estimating homelessness from the Census see Information Paper - A Statistical Definition of Homelessness (cat. no. 4922.0) and Information Paper: Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001).

## **Factsheet: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness**

### **FACTSHEET: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Homelessness**

The ABS definition of homelessness has been developed for application to the general population in Australia. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over-represented in the measures of homelessness developed with this definition, there are likely to be additional aspects to homelessness from an Indigenous perspective that the definition does not currently adequately capture. In recognition of the differences in understanding of the concepts of home and homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian context, the ABS is undertaking further research about how the ABS statistical definition of homelessness may be understood in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian context. The ABS will establish a sub group of the HSRG to provide recommendations to the HSRG for the development of a definition relevant to homelessness in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context. This has commenced and the results of this definitional work will be released in 2013. Any recommendations from this group will be considered by the ABS in both Census enumeration and subsequent estimation of homelessness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The ABS will also work to develop a culturally appropriate module on previous experiences of homelessness suitable for inclusion in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey which can be compared to estimates from the total population from the 2014 General Social Survey.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have been under enumerated in the Census and estimates of homeless based on Census data will be an underestimation. In the 2006 Census, the underenumeration of Indigenous Australians was 11.5%. Some of those who were under-enumerated may have been homeless at the time of the Census.

Underestimation of homeless among those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who were enumerated in the Census may occur as, for some Indigenous people, 'incorrect' information regarding 'usual residence' may have provided which masks their homelessness.

It is debated in the literature whether the concept of 'no usual address' is appropriate for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Morphy (2007) discusses the problems in defining a 'usual resident' and 'visitor' in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian context, as the distinction between 'my country / not my country' is more salient than the distinction between 'resident / visitor'. This issue becomes particularly problematic for people who are highly mobile. Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2008) also discuss the relevance of 'no usual address' to the Indigenous population, as the 'usual address' question is approached with a different cultural frame of reference. They note that it is not culturally appropriate to record 'no usual address' on Census night because 'home' is understood in a different way, particularly when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are staying with their extended family. Due to the different cultural frame of reference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it is widely assumed that the western concept of 'no usual address' is under-reported by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. This issue will impact on Census based estimates of homelessness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons enumerated in the Census who are classified as being in the categories for 'improvised dwellings, tents, sleepers out', or temporarily visiting friends or relatives while homeless.

While the increased effort in the 2011 Census to improve the enumeration of Indigenous Australians was successful, under enumeration is still large, and the difficulties in differentiating between those who may be homeless remain.

As part of the development for Census 2016, the ABS will consider how they can improve the identification of homeless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in the Census but recognise the need to use other data sources to gain a more complete picture of homelessness.

For analysis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness from the Census see the ABS publications: Discussion Paper: Methodological Review of Counting the Homeless, 2006 (cat. no. 2050.0.55.001) and Position Paper - ABS Review of Counting the Homeless Methodology, August 2011 (cat. no. 2050.0.55.002).

For more information on the definition of homelessness or the methodology for estimating homelessness from the Census see Information Paper - A Statistical Definition of Homelessness (cat. no. 4922.0) and Information Paper: Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001).



## About this Release

This Information Paper presents the Australian Bureau of Statistics statistical definition of homelessness. The definition was developed in consultation with the ABS' Homelessness Statistics Reference Group. Future ABS surveys and the Census will adopt this definition in its collection and output of current and past experiences of homelessness.

## Expanded Contents

### CONTENTS

Introduction

Introduction

Overview of definition of homelessness

OVERVIEW OF DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

Context for the development of an ABS definition of homelessness

CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ABS DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

The elements

THE ELEMENTS

The three elements of the ABS homelessness definition

Counting unit

Specific exclusions

Domestic violence

Severe crowding

Marginal housing

Other homeless definitions used to inform the ABS definition of homelessness

OTHER HOMELESS DEFINITIONS USED TO INFORM THE ABS DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

Operationalisation of the definition

OPERATIONALISATION OF THE DEFINITION

Process for developing definition of homelessness

PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

Purpose and Scope of the Definition Subgroup

The Process/Approach

Where did the views of Definition subgroup members merge and where did they diverge?

Future directions

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

## Introduction

[Contents >> Introduction](#)

### INTRODUCTION

This section contains the following subsection :  
Introduction

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Introduction

[Contents >> Introduction >> Introduction](#)

### INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is not just the result of too few houses - its causes are many and varied. Domestic violence, a shortage of

affordable housing, unemployment, mental illness, family breakdown and drug and alcohol abuse all contribute to the level of homelessness in Australia (FaHCSIA, 2008a). Homelessness is not a choice.

For some people, homelessness is an isolated event - it happens once and for a short time. For others, a small minority, homelessness is part of a chaotic and uncertain life of poverty and disadvantage. These people tend to cycle in and out of homelessness and when they do find housing, it tends to be short term (FaHCSIA, 2008a).

People who are homeless are among the most marginalised people in Australia. Homelessness is one of the most potent examples of disadvantage in the community, and one of the most important markers of social exclusion (Department of Human Services Victoria, 2002). To have a socially inclusive Australia, all Australians need to have the capabilities, opportunities, responsibilities and resources to learn, work, engage and have a say (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2012). Homelessness freezes people out of opportunities that most Australians enjoy (FaHCSIA, 2008b).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) General Social Survey 2010 identified that those people who had experienced homelessness at some time in the previous 10 years were much more likely to be socially excluded than those people who had never been homeless. Overall, people who had experienced homelessness were:

- more likely to have lower levels of educational attainment;
- more likely to have a disability or long-term health condition;
- more than four times as likely to report that they had a disability type or restriction which was psychological;
- nearly three times as likely to report having been a victim of violence in the previous 12 months;
- more likely to live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
- nearly five times as likely to report multiple types of cash flow problems such as being unable to pay bills on time, and ten times as likely to have gone without meals because they could not afford them;
- much more likely to be unemployed; and
- twice as likely to be supported by government pensions or allowances (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012)

Homelessness may be the cause, or the result of disadvantage and social exclusion. And disadvantage and social exclusion may persist even after a person is no longer homeless.

Effectively targeting policies and services, monitoring progress and understanding outcomes for those who are or have been homeless, requires transparent, consistent and reliable statistics. However, people who are homeless are among the hardest population to collect statistics from. The ABS has developed a program of social statistics on homelessness that includes, but is not limited to, the development of prevalence measures from the five yearly Census of Population and Housing and through longitudinal linkage to report on outcome of and pathways into homelessness, reporting previous experiences of homelessness through household surveys such as the General Social Survey, and the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers; and experiences of homelessness for people who leave a violent partner through the Personal Safety Survey.

Comparable quality statistics, over time and across data sources, require a clear conceptual framework and definition to underpin the operationalisation of that definition in multiple collections, including fine tuning those datasets for that purpose.

This Information Paper presents the Australian Bureau of Statistics statistical definition of homelessness. The definition was developed in consultation with the ABS' Homelessness Statistics Reference Group. Future ABS surveys will adopt this definition. However, not all dimensions of the definition can be operationalised in all data collections. The ABS will publish an **Information Paper: Guide to Homelessness Statistics** (cat. no. 4923.0) in November 2012 to assist users with analysing the multiple data sources available to obtain a more complete picture of homelessness. The guide will outline which parts of the homeless definition ABS collections can, or cannot capture.

The ABS definition of homelessness has been developed for application to the general population in Australia. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over-represented in the measures of homelessness developed with this definition, there are likely to be additional aspects to homelessness from an Indigenous perspective that the definition does not currently adequately capture. The ABS will consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on culturally appropriate conceptualisations of homelessness and on the options for measurement in regard to ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander surveys and in analysing the Census data.

Because of the complexity of homelessness from a social policy and service delivery perspective, there are a wide range of views on what constitutes homelessness. While the ABS has benefited from expert advice, there are areas where it was not possible to obtain agreement among all experts. In these circumstances, the ABS has balanced the views of different experts and decided, from a **statistical perspective**, what the appropriate treatment of these circumstances should be. It acknowledges that there will continue to be differences of view, and in producing statistics on homelessness, the ABS will be intending to present the information in a way that alternative views of homelessness can be constructed to suit particular purposes.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Overview of definition of homelessness

[Contents >> Overview of definition of homelessness](#)

## OVERVIEW OF DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

This section contains the following subsection :  
OVERVIEW OF DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## OVERVIEW OF DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

Contents >> Overview of definition of homelessness >> OVERVIEW OF DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

### OVERVIEW OF DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

The ABS definition of homelessness is informed by an understanding of homelessness as 'home'lessness, not rooflessness. It emphasises the core elements of 'home' in Anglo American and European interpretations of the meaning of home as identified in research evidence (Mallett, 2004). These elements may include: a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety, and the ability to control living space. Homelessness is therefore a lack of one or more of the elements that represent 'home'.

In brief, the ABS statistical definition is that:

When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

The definition has been constructed from a conceptual framework centred around the following elements:

- Adequacy of the dwelling; and
- Security of tenure in the dwelling; and
- Control of, and access to space for social relations.

These elements are explained in more detail in Chapter 4.

People must lack one or more of these elements to be defined as homeless. However, people who lack one or more of these elements are not necessarily classified as homeless. While homelessness is not a choice, some people may choose to live in situations that might parallel the living situations of people who are homeless. For example living in a shed while building a home on their own property, or on holiday travelling and staying with friends. These people have choice because they have the capacity to access other accommodation that are safe, adequate and provide for social relations. Having access to accommodation alternatives is contingent on having the financial, physical, psychological **and** personal means to access these alternatives (see Chapter 4).

This Information paper presents:

- more detail on the elements and the conceptual framework underpinning the ABS definition in Chapter 4;
- the context for the development of an ABS definition of homelessness in Chapter 3;
- other definitions used to inform the ABS definition in Chapter 5;
- the operationalisation and output of the ABS definition in ABS household surveys and Censuses in Chapter 6;
- the process that was undertaken to develop the definition of homelessness in Chapter 7, including the areas of contention and the reason for the ABS's decision in these areas; and
- ABS's future directions for further development of the ABS definition and its implementation in ABS collections (Chapter 8).

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Context for the development of an ABS definition of homelessness

## CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ABS DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

This section contains the following subsection :

CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ABS DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ABS DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

Contents >> Context for the development of an ABS definition of homelessness >> CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ABS DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

### CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ABS DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

Definitions of homelessness are culturally and historically contingent. They range from limited objective measures which conflate homelessness with rooflessness to more equivocal subjective definitions founded on culturally and historically determined ideas of 'home'.

Over the last decade there has been increasing international attention on the need for a consistent definition of homelessness, particularly in Europe. Governments, researchers, statisticians, policy makers and service providers alike have recognised that the development of an agreed definition for statistical purposes that allows for consistent measurement of the scope and scale of homeless both within countries but also across countries. In Europe this has led to the development of the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) definition (European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless, 2011). Closer to Australia, the ETHOS definition informed the development of the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness (Statistics New Zealand, 2009).

In Australia, while debate about definitions has occurred among academics, policy makers and service providers over the last decade or so, a loose consensus was achieved around the tri-partite cultural definition proposed by Professors Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2008) that spans from rooflessness to insecure and inadequate housing. This definition has informed the estimation undertaken by Chamberlain and MacKenzie of homelessness using Census and other data sources.

In 2008, following widespread discussion in Australia about the meaning and measurement of social inclusion and exclusion, the ABS recognised the need to develop robust and transparent homelessness statistics across a range of ABS datasets. This decision coincided with the release of the Federal Government White Paper on Homelessness (**The Road Home**) (FaHCSIA, 2008a), which highlighted homelessness as an important social issue in Australia and identified the need to "turn off the tap", "break the cycle" and arrest chronic homelessness.

Up until 2008, ABS had neither developed its own definition of homelessness nor adopted any other definition, and it did not provide official estimates of homelessness. However, ABS did support research undertaken by academics Professors Chamberlain and MacKenzie who estimated the numbers of homeless people in Australia using the 1996, 2001 and 2006 Censuses of Population and Housing (Chamberlain, 1999; Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2003, 2008). Their estimation work was underpinned by the cultural definition of homelessness developed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2008).

Following the decision to develop official ABS homelessness statistics, the ABS began developmental work in this area by first reviewing the methodology employed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie to estimate homelessness through the Census of Population and Housing. During this review (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, 2011a and 2011b) the ABS identified the need to develop a robust, defensible and evidence informed definition of homelessness for statistical purposes. The ABS began this work by reviewing key national (SAAP and Cultural) and international (ETHOS and NZ statistics) definitions.

A key outcome of the ABS review into the methodology for estimating homelessness from the Census, including the homelessness sector consultation that followed, was the establishment of the ABS Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG). The HSRG was established to provide advice to the ABS about the development of homelessness statistics. A definition sub-group of the HSRG was established to inform the work on the homelessness definition. See Appendices 1 and 2 for the membership and terms of reference for HSRG. The process involved in the development of the ABS homeless definition is in Chapter 7.

This move to producing official ABS statistics on homelessness represents an important development for the ABS and reflects commitment to improve the measurement of housing and homelessness in Australia. The ABS is working to improve the measurement across a range of ABS data sets. To date, the ABS has published information about people who have had a previous experience of homelessness from its 2010 General Social Survey, and will collect similar information in its 2012

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## The elements

[Contents >> The elements](#)

### THE ELEMENTS

This section contains the following subsection :

#### THE ELEMENTS

The three elements of the ABS homelessness definition

Counting unit

Specific exclusions

Domestic violence

Severe crowding

Marginal housing

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## THE ELEMENTS

[Contents >> The elements >> THE ELEMENTS](#)

### THE ELEMENTS

The ABS definition of homelessness is informed by an understanding of homelessness as 'home'lessness, not rooflessness. It emphasises the core elements of 'home' in Anglo American and European interpretations of the meaning of home as identified in research evidence (Mallett, 2004). These elements include: a sense of security, stability, privacy, safety, and the ability to control living space. Homelessness is therefore a lack of one or more of the elements that represent 'home'.

Recognising this, and drawing on the ETHOS and NZ Statistics definitions, the ABS definition has been built from three key conceptual elements. These elements are used to assess whether someone in a particular living condition can be defined as homeless.

In brief, the ABS statistical definition is that:

When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

The definition has been constructed from a conceptual framework centred around the following elements:

- Adequacy of the dwelling;
- Security of tenure in the dwelling; and
- Control of, and access to space for social relations.

The ABS definition does not include those people who are 'at risk of homelessness' nor does it include housing situations that put them at risk of homelessness.

### Accommodation alternatives

People must lack one or more of the three elements listed above to be defined as homeless. However, the elements are

considered in the context of an overarching consideration of accommodation alternatives. People who lack one or more of these elements are not necessarily classified as homeless. While homelessness is not a choice, some people may choose to live in situations that might parallel the living situations of people who are homeless, for example living in a shed while building a home on their own property, or on holiday travelling and staying with friends. These people have choice because they have the capacity to access other accommodation alternatives that are safe, adequate and provide for social relations. People's exercise of choice in not accessing accommodation alternatives is contingent on them having **each of** the financial, physical, psychological **and** personal means necessary to provide access to these alternatives.

**Financial means** - a person has income, wealth and savings that would allow them to access suitable accommodation. Those with very limited income, wealth and savings may not have the means to afford to pay for suitable accommodation and therefore would not have the capacity to choose other forms of safe and adequate living circumstances.

**Physical means** - a person has the physical capabilities to allow them to access suitable accommodation. Some physical impairments may prevent a person from being able to seek out, access and sustain suitable accommodation and therefore may limit their capacity to access safe and adequate living circumstances.

**Psychological means** - a person has the psychological means to allow them to seek out and access suitable accommodation. Some types of mental illnesses or cognitive injuries may prevent a person from being able to seek out, access and sustain suitable accommodation.

**Personal means** - a person has the personal means to allow them to access suitable accommodation. For example, a lack of employment, qualification or skills to gain employment or support outside of the household may prevent someone from being able to seek out, access and sustain suitable accommodation.

If any of the above means are absent, a person does not have accommodation alternatives. If they are also lacking in one or more of the three elements of homelessness then they would be considered to be in a homelessness living situation.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## The three elements of the ABS homelessness definition

[Contents](#) >> [The elements](#) >> [The three elements of the ABS homelessness definition](#)

### THE THREE ELEMENTS OF THE ABS HOMELESSNESS DEFINITION

#### Adequacy of the dwelling

This element covers whether the structure of the dwelling renders it fit for human habitation (including, for renters, that the building is used for the purpose for which it is zoned), and the dwelling has access to basic facilities (such as kitchen facilities and bathroom). For example, whether the dwelling satisfies building codes, does not have quit, improvement or control orders on it, has basic facilities and is not improvised.

If the dwelling is inadequate by lacking in any of the aspects outlined above and the person also lacks accommodation alternatives, the person would be considered to be homeless.

#### Security of tenure in the dwelling

This element covers a person's legal right to occupy a dwelling, with stability and security of tenure such as owning (with or without a mortgage) the dwelling and/or land, or renting with a formal lease or similar right that could be enforced by the tenant. This also includes a familial reflected security of tenure, for example, children living with their parents.

The rights that could be enforced by the tenant include informal or verbal agreements ('contracts'), written agreements or evidentiary monetary exchange which establishes a right to occupy which can be enforced through common law and provides the holder with the same residual security of tenure that they would enjoy with a formal lease. This also includes a familial reflected security of tenure, for example, children living with their parents. The security of tenure dimension of this element may take into account the initial term of the lease agreement, or residual period remaining on a fixed term lease, or the notice period required to terminate a right to occupy. An industry standard period of 60 days notice may be sufficient to satisfy the right to occupy. In the case of mobile dwellings, the right to occupy is extended to the land / water site on which it is placed.

Those people who have no tenure or tenure that is short and not extendable would be considered to be homeless if they also lack accommodation alternatives.

#### Control of, and access to space for social relations

This element covers whether a person or household has control of and access to space so they are able to pursue social relations, have personal (or household) living space, maintain privacy and the household has exclusive access to kitchen facilities and a bathroom.

Those households (or people for those who are living in accommodation such as boarding houses etc) which do not have their own living space that enables them to maintain privacy or do not have exclusive access to kitchen facilities and a bathroom, would, if they also lacked accommodation alternatives, be considered to be homeless.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Counting unit

[Contents >> The elements >> Counting unit](#)

### COUNTING UNIT

The basic counting unit for homelessness estimation is the person. This counting unit provides for the richness of their personal characteristics (including relationships with others and their living situation) to be reported for analysis.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Specific exclusions

[Contents >> The elements >> Specific exclusions](#)

### SPECIFIC EXCLUSIONS

The ABS has identified and excluded specific living situations from the definition of homelessness. While these living situations lack one or more of the key elements of 'home' identified in the definition of homelessness, the people occupying these places are not regarded as homeless. People in these living situations are not classified as homeless because:

- they may have chosen to live in these circumstances and have accommodation alternatives; or
- are required by law to live in these circumstances; or
- are acceptable temporary living arrangements (such as student halls of residence); or
- it is essential for their broader health and wellbeing to be living in these situations.

The specific exclusions are:

- people **confined** in prisons, detention centres and other institutions such as juvenile correctional facilities or hospitals;
- students living in halls of residence; and
- members of religious orders such as monks and nuns living in seminaries and nunneries and similar establishments.

### How the elements interact with accommodation to determine whether a living situation is homelessness

The following matrix articulates the application of the three elements of homelessness, where a person does not have either financial, physical, psychological or personal means to seek out suitable accommodation.

When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

The specific exclusions outlined earlier in the Chapter are exempt from evaluation in this matrix.

### Hierarchy for the conceptual elements: an absence of which indicates homelessness

A combination of Xs show the element/s is lacking and whether the description indicates a person is homeless

The table reads **downward** with a final decision on homelessness being marked as 'Yes' in the final row

		Security of tenure in the dwelling		Adequacy of the dwelling		Control of, and access to social relations	
		no tenure	initial tenure short & not extendable (a)	no basic facilities exist	structure of dwelling is inadequate	no control or access to space	no privacy
Security of tenure in the dwelling	no tenure	X					
	initial tenure short & not extendable (a)		X				
Adequacy of the dwelling	no basic facilities exist			X			
	structure of dwelling is inadequate				X		
Control of, and access to social relations	no control or access to space					X	
	no privacy						X
Accommodation alternatives of the person	no financial	X**	X**	X**	X**	X**	X**
	no personal						
	no psychological						
	no physical						
Homeless?		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

(a) Includes a variety of tenure such as people staying in boarding houses, supported accommodation (long term and short term) and renters on month to month leases.

\*\* An X for accommodation alternatives applies to **any** of the components of financial, personal, physical or psychological resources. If they do not exist the person's situation needs to be further considered in terms of the other elements on the table.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Domestic violence

[Contents >> The elements >> Domestic violence](#)

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Under the ABS homelessness definition, a person displaced from their home due to domestic violence becomes homeless if they have a temporary living situation and do not have access to accommodation alternatives that are secure, safe and adequate (and the home in which they were subject to domestic violence is not considered a safe alternative accommodation to their homeless situation).

A person experiencing the violence who remains in their unsafe home with the perpetrator, could be considered to lack control of and access to social relations. However, assessing these situations in a measurement context is very difficult, and the ABS definition currently excludes such situations from its definition of homelessness and characterises their living situation as being precarious or unstable and being at risk of homelessness. ABS will report the available information on these living situations and continue to develop its statistical measurement in this area.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Severe crowding

[Contents >> The elements >> Severe crowding](#)

### SEVERE CROWDING

People living in crowded dwellings represent a continuum within the scope of those who are marginally housed. In the context of the elements being developed for the ABS definition of homelessness, people living in severe overcrowding are considered to be homeless because they do not have control of, or access to space for social relations.



There are many situations of overcrowding which do not threaten the health and safety of the occupants. For example, the overcrowding may be slight, or for a short period of time. However, severe and sustained overcrowding can put the health and safety of the occupants at risk.

When people are subjected to severe, sustained overcrowding, all persons in the dwelling experience the absence of access to personal space, regardless of personal tenures. For example, while some people in a dwelling may own it, and many others also occupy the dwelling as their usual residence, the access to personal space of all is compromised. In such circumstances, if people had accommodation alternatives it would be expected that they would have exercised them.

In terms of the key elements in the ABS definition, all people living in the severely overcrowded dwelling do not have control of, or access to space for social relations.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Marginal housing

[Contents >> The elements >> Marginal housing](#)

### MARGINAL HOUSING

Homelessness is a component of marginal housing. Other marginal housing outside the concept of homelessness will be reported separately where available.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Other homeless definitions used to inform the ABS definition of homelessness

[Contents >> Other homeless definitions used to inform the ABS definition of homelessness](#)

### OTHER HOMELESS DEFINITIONS USED TO INFORM THE ABS DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

This section contains the following subsection :

OTHER HOMELESS DEFINITIONS USED TO INFORM THE ABS DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## OTHER HOMELESS DEFINITIONS USED TO INFORM THE ABS DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

[Contents >> Other homeless definitions used to inform the ABS definition of homelessness >> OTHER HOMELESS DEFINITIONS USED TO INFORM THE ABS DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS](#)

### OTHER HOMELESS DEFINITIONS USED TO INFORM THE ABS DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

In developing the three key elements listed in the preceding chapters, the ABS has drawn on research on notions of homelessness. The ABS draws heavily on the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) and subsequent work by Statistics New Zealand for the NZ statistical definition of homelessness. The ABS also reviewed the Chamberlain and MacKenzie cultural definition, the SAAP definition and the recently released Australian Government exposure draft on homelessness. These definitions are presented in Appendix 3.

## ETHOS Definition

The European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion defined homelessness as being without a 'home'. Having a 'home' can be understood as: having an adequate dwelling (or space) over which a person and his/her family can exercise exclusive possession (physical domain); being able to maintain privacy and enjoy relations (social domain) and having a legal title to occupation (legal domain).

ETHOS classifies homeless people into four broad conceptual categories:

- **rooflessness:** without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough
- **houselessness:** with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelter
- **living in insecure housing:** threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence
- **living in inadequate housing:** in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding

These four conceptual categories are divided into 13 operational categories to which are mapped 24 living situations as shown below.

		Operational Category		Living Situation	
C O N C E P T U A L  C A T E G O R Y	R O O F L E S S	1	People Living Rough	1.1	Public Space or External Space
		2	People in Emergency Accommodation	2.1	Night Shelter
	H O U S E L E S S	3	People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1 3.2 3.3	Homeless hostel Temporary Accommodation Transitional supported accommodation
		4	People in Women's Shelter	4.1	Women's Shelter Accommodation
		5	People in accommodation for Immigrants	5.1 5.2	Temporary Accommodation/ Reception Centres Migrant Workers Accommodation
		6	People due to be released from Institutions	6.1 6.2 6.3	Penal Institutions Medical Institutions(*) Children's Institutions/ homes
		7	People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)	7.1 7.2	Residential care for older homeless people Supported accommodation for formerly homeless people
	I N S E C U R E	8	People living in insecure accommodation	8.1 8.2 8.3	Temporarily with family/ friends No legal (sub)tenancy Illegal occupation of land
		9	People living under threat of eviction	9.1 9.2	Legal orders enforced (rented) Re-possession orders (owned)
		10	People living under threat of violence	10.1	Police recorded Incidents
		11	People living in temporary/ non-conventional structures	11.1 11.2 11.3	Mobile homes Non-conventional building Temporary Structure
	I N A D E Q U A T E	12	People living in unfit housing	12.1	Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation
		13	People living in extreme over-crowding	13.1	Highest national norm of overcrowding

(\*) Includes drug rehabilitation institutions, psychiatric hospitals, etc.

In December 2010 the Jury of the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness concluded that homelessness is a complex, dynamic and differentiated process with different routes and exits, or "pathways", for different individuals and groups. The jury recommends the adoption of the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion according to four main living situations of rooflessness; houselessness; living in insecure housing; and living in inadequate housing.

The ETHOS conceptual definition appears to align in most respects with the ABS definition. Its use of the term extreme over-crowding in operational group 13 corresponds to the ABS concept of severe overcrowding.

The ETHOS definition differs in its inclusion of people in immigration detention centres (operational group 5) and in institutions (such as prisons) who are due for release but for whom there is no housing available (operational group 6).

These are explicit exclusions from the ABS definition.

In ETHOS operational group 9 (people living under threat of eviction) the 'threat' includes either a repossession order (e.g. mortgage default) or eviction order for renters. In the ABS definition, these people have no tenure and will be homeless if they have no accommodation alternatives. Remaining physically within a dwelling to which you have no legal right and for which a legal process has commenced to remove you is akin to 'squatting' in the dwelling.

ETHOS operational group 7 (people receiving longer term support due to homelessness) could be construed to include people entering residential aged care in Australia on a priority basis due to homelessness. The ABS definition would regard these people as having tenure and they would not be homeless. For those in longer term supported accommodation, characterised by some security of tenure, the ABS definition would exclude them from being homeless (e.g., transitional housing in Victoria).

### Statistics New Zealand Definition

Statistics NZ used the ETHOS as the basis for their definition of homelessness, with changes to accommodate the NZ environment and conceptual requirements. The definition is based on three domains as follows:

- The **social domain** is being able to pursue normal social relations, have a personal (household) living space, maintain privacy and have safe accommodation.
- The **legal domain** covers having exclusive possession, security of occupation or tenure.
- The **physical domain** is the structural aspect of housing and means having habitable housing.

The intersection of those three domains with housing led Statistics NZ to define homelessness as living situations where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing: are without shelter, in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation with a household or living in uninhabitable housing.

Under the NZ definition people who have 'options to acquire safe and secure private accommodation' are not defined as homeless. This overarching consideration is a corollary for the ABS definition incorporation of accommodation alternatives.

Some of the 'inadequate' and 'insecure' sections of ETHOS are not included because individuals in them are not currently homeless but rather at risk of becoming homeless. These cover the same exclusions for the ABS definition (i.e. ETHOS operational categories 5, 6, and 7). In addition the NZ definition also excludes ETHOS operational categories 9 (threat of eviction) and 10 (living under threat of violence).

### Chamberlain and MacKenzie Cultural Definition

In terms of the ABS definition of homelessness compared to the Chamberlain and MacKenzie Cultural definition:

**Minimum community standard: a small rental flat - with a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom and an element of security of tenure** (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 2008).

The ABS definition is a broader definition than the Chamberlain and MacKenzie definition because it is centred around the concept of 'home' and includes the critical elements of home. The C&M definition is essentially framed around an accommodation standard.

Like the C&M definition, the ABS definition includes security of tenure and the adequacy of the dwelling, however in the ABS definition both of these elements are more specific in describing what security of tenure is and what the adequacy of the dwelling is.

The C&M definition describes security of tenure as 'an element of security of tenure' and the adequacy of the dwelling is that it has a bedroom, living room, kitchen and bathroom but not whether the dwelling should be fit for human habitation. Using the C&M definition a studio apartment could be considered below the minimum standard.

The ABS definition includes other elements in which C&M do not include:

- the third element - control of, and access to space AND
- accommodation alternatives.

### ABS Definition compared to Other Definitions

The following table compares the ABS elements to other definition of homelessness to identify the similarities and differences between each of the definitions of homelessness that were used to inform the ABS definition.

# Contrasting the ABS four key elements with ETHOS and Statistics NZ definitions

ABS element	ETHOS	Statistics NZ	Cultural definition (Chamberlain & MacKenzie)	SAAP definition	Exposure Draft – Homelessness Bill 2012
<b>Adequacy of the dwelling</b>  <b>Description:</b>  Whether the structure renders it fit for human habitation, and the dwelling has basic facilities (such as kitchen facilities and a bathroom)	<b>Physical domain</b>  Defined as having an adequate dwelling (or space) over which a person and his/her family can exercise exclusive possession  Appears to define improvised dwellings as insecure or inadequate housing, no discussion of facilities	<b>Physical domain</b>  Defined as the structural aspect of housing and means having habitable housing  Same as ETHOS, includes improvised dwellings, no discussion of facilities	Does not define whether structure is fit for human habitation.  Defines adequacy as having living room, kitchen, bathroom and bedroom.	Defined as adequate access to safe and secure housing if the housing to which the person has access:  - does not damage, or is unlikely to damage the person's health, and  - does not threaten the person's safety; and  - does not place the person in circumstances and housing which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security or affordability of that housing.	Partly covered.  A persons is experiencing homelessness if:  a) the person is <b>sleeping rough or living in an improvised dwelling</b> ; or  b) either: i) the person is temporarily living with friends or relatives and has no other usual address; or ii) the person is living in accommodation provided by a specialised homelessness service; or  c) the persons is living in a boarding house, caravan park, hostel, refuge, shelter or similar accommodation, whether on a short-term or long-term basis, in respect of which the person has no secure lease and the person is not living in that accommodation by choice.

ABS element	ETHOS	Statistics NZ	Cultural definition (Chamberlain & MacKenzie)	SAAP definition	Exposure Draft – Homelessness Bill 2012
<b>Security of tenure to the dwelling</b>  <b>Description:</b>  Legal right to a dwelling – security of tenure	<b>Legal domain</b>  Defined as having a legal title to occupation	<b>Legal domain</b>  Defined as having exclusive possession, security of occupation or tenure  Includes: Exclusive possession in addition to security of occupation/ tenure	Defined as an element of security of tenure.	Unclear whether included.  Access to secure housing is included but unclear whether this is the security of tenure or security of the dwelling.	Partly covered.  A persons is experiencing homelessness if:  a) the person is sleeping rough or living in an improvised dwelling; or  b) either: i) the person is <b>temporarily living</b> with friends or relatives and <b>has no other usual address</b> ; or ii) the person is living in accommodation provided by a specialised homelessness service; or  c) the persons is living in a boarding house, caravan park, hostel, refuge, shelter or similar accommodation, whether on a short-term or long-term basis, in respect of which the person has <b>no secure lease</b> and the person is not living in that accommodation by choice.

<b>ABS element</b>	<i>ETHOS</i>	<i>Statistics NZ</i>	<i>Cultural definition (Chamberlain &amp; MacKenzie)</i>	<i>SAAP definition</i>	<i>Exposure Draft – Homelessness Bill 2012</i>
<b>Control of, and access to space for social relations</b>  <b>Description:</b>  Household has control and access to space so they are able to pursue social relations, have personal (household) living space, maintain privacy, and the household has exclusive access to kitchen facilities and a bathroom.	<b>Social domain</b>  Defined as being able to maintain privacy and enjoy relations	<b>Social domain</b>  Defined as being able to pursue normal social relations, have a personal (household) living space, maintain privacy and have safe accommodation	Not specifically included but implied in the minimum standard of having a living room, kitchen, bathroom and bedroom.	Does not marginalise the person based on inadequate personal amenities, and the economic and social supports that a house affords.	Not explicitly covered.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Operationalisation of the definition

[Contents >> Operationalisation of the definition](#)

### OPERATIONALISATION OF THE DEFINITION

This section contains the following subsection :  
OPERATIONALISATION OF THE DEFINITION

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## OPERATIONALISATION OF THE DEFINITION

[Contents >> Operationalisation of the definition >> OPERATIONALISATION OF THE DEFINITION](#)

### OPERATIONALISATION OF THE DEFINITION

Based on the concept of homelessness outlined in this Information Paper, the operationalisation of the definition will vary depending on the data source. The scope and field procedures of any collection will have an impact on the operationalisation of the definition. For example, if a survey does not go to people who are not in private dwellings or who are visitors, such as past cycles of the General Social Survey, it can collect information about previous experiences of homelessness but will not collect data from many of the people who are currently homeless.

The components of the definition that are measurable in a data source will also vary between data sources. For example, a survey can collect more information on the three key elements of homelessness than can be collected in a Census of Population and Housing, whereas the Census of Population and Housing is designed to collect data about all persons in Australia on Census night.

The operationalisation of the definition in each data source should clearly articulate which aspects of the definition have been measured, and which aspects could not be fully operationalised within the collection.

In addition to producing homelessness statistics according to the elements that determine it, it is useful to present information on homelessness in a number of different ways, including but not limited to the main characteristics of persons who are homelessness.

To show homelessness according to the living situation of the person at the time of collection (or at most recent homeless experience), the following categories can be used:

1. Persons living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out
  - 1a. Persons sleeping out (where available)
  - 1b. Persons living in improvised dwellings or tents (where available)
2. Persons living in short term supported accommodation for the homeless (where available)
3. Persons staying temporarily with other households
  - 3a. Persons staying temporarily with friends and relatives (where available)
  - 3b. Persons staying temporarily in visitor only households (where available)
4. Persons living in boarding houses
5. Persons living temporarily in other lodgings
6. Persons living in severely crowded dwellings

While these categories will overlap in a small number of circumstances, it is more useful to assign people to only one category to ensure they are not double counted in the homeless estimates. The best way to do this is to include them in the category that is the highest on the hierarchy. For example those persons living in a severely crowded improvised dwelling would be coded to 'Persons living in improvised dwelling, tents or sleepers out' rather than 'Persons living in severely crowded dwellings'.

The following hierarchy shows how each of the output categories align with the elements within the definition.

How does the hierarchy relate to output categories?

An X indicates what people in this group lack this aspect of the element to determine that their living circumstance is homelessness

	Security of tenure in the dwelling		Adequacy of the dwelling		Control of, access to social relations		Accommodation alternatives of the person			
	no tenure	initial tenure short & not extendable(a)	no basic facilities exist	structure of dwelling is inadequate	no control or access to space	no privacy	no financial	no personal	no psychological	no physical
<b>Homeless Operational Groups</b>										
Improvised dwellings, tents, sleepers out										
improvised dwellings	X		X		X	X				
rough sleepers	X		X		X	X				
Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless	X				X	X				
some transitional housing		X			X	X				
Persons staying temporarily with other households										
Persons staying temporarily with friends or relatives	X				X	X				
Persons staying temporarily in visitor only households	X				X	X	X**	X**	X**	X**
Persons staying in boarding houses	X				X	X				
Persons staying in other temporary lodging (b)	X				X?	X?				
Severe Crowding										
those who own/have the lease etc.					X	X				
those who do not own/have the lease	X				X	X				

(a) Includes a variety of tenure such as people staying in boarding houses, supported accommodation (long term and short term) and renters on month to month leases.

(b) Note there will be lots of different situations some will lack control of space etc. but all will lack security of tenure.

\*\* An X for accommodation alternatives applies to **any** of the components of financial, personal, physical or psychological resources. If they do not exist the person's situation needs to be further considered in terms of the other elements on the table.

For the operationalisation of the ABS statistical definition of homelessness in the Census of Population and Housing, refer to the ABS publication: **Information Paper - Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing** (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001).

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Process for developing definition of homelessness

[Contents >> Process for developing definition of homelessness](#)

### PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

This section contains the following subsection :

PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

Purpose and Scope of the Definition Subgroup

The Process/Approach

Where did the views of Definition subgroup members merge and where did they diverge?

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

[Contents >> Process for developing definition of homelessness >> PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS](#)

### PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

A key outcome of the ABS methodological review of **Counting the Homeless**, and the homelessness sector consultation that followed, was the establishment of the ABS Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG). HSRG was established to advise to ABS about the development of homelessness statistics. A definition subgroup of HSRG was established to inform ABS work on the homelessness definition.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Purpose and Scope of the Definition Subgroup

[Contents >> Process for developing definition of homelessness >> Purpose and Scope of the Definition Subgroup](#)

### PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE DEFINITION SUBGROUP

The purpose of the subgroup was to advise HSRG and ABS on the key elements of a conceptual framework that could underpin the ABS definition of homelessness for use in compiling official statistics in Australia (details of the membership of the group are provided in Appendix 1). The work of the definition subgroup was framed by tight timelines linked to specified ABS release dates for ABS official estimates of homelessness from the 2001, 2006 and 2011 Censuses of Population and Housing. Because of the tight timelines the work of the subgroup was divided into two phases. The first phase, covered in this paper, does not address any specific cultural definition issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples understanding of homelessness. The second phase relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness commenced in August 2012.

### Subgroup output

A description of the work of the subgroup, including the discussion points and views expressed about the key elements of a definition, was identified as the main output of the subgroup, including advice on the suitability of the cultural definition for the ABS purposes. A paper addressing these issues was prepared for the HSRG for endorsement at its meeting on 18 July 2012.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## The Process/Approach

[Contents >> Process for developing definition of homelessness >> The Process/Approach](#)

## THE PROCESS/APPROACH

The Definition subgroup first met in December 2011. To complete its first phase work it met on eight occasions, including three all day face to face meetings and five teleconferences between December 2011 and June 2012.

The subgroup developed its thinking about the key elements of the definition through both a top down and a bottom up approach including:

- consideration of national and international statistical definitions of homelessness; and
- review and analysis of over 300 housing and personal circumstances in Australia to test whether homelessness, as understood by researchers, service practitioners and policy and program officers, could be mapped to a basic set of key elements.

At key points in this process subgroup members were invited to seek broader stakeholder feedback about the various living situations under review and the implications for key elements of a homelessness definition.

Following critical analysis of the definitions and living situations ABS articulated a range of possible elements to support a definition of homelessness. Members discussed the pros and cons of these elements, and refining the elements over time. While consensus was not reached in the subgroup, the ABS definition largely reflects a majority view of members of the subgroup.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Where did the views of Definition subgroup members merge and where did they diverge?

Contents >> Process for developing definition of homelessness >> Where did the views of Definition subgroup members merge and where did they diverge?

### WHERE DID THE VIEWS OF DEFINITION SUBGROUP MEMBERS MERGE AND WHERE DID THEY DIVERGE?

The subgroup was in agreement on a number of elements (and of the components of those elements), but had divergent views on some components of the definition, as well as on the process of developing advice on the definition.

#### Areas of agreement

There was large agreement within the subgroup on relevant issues, including that:

- Homelessness is broader than rooflessness or houselessness;
- Cultural views of homelessness evolve over time;
- Lack of security of tenure is a feature of homelessness; and
- Inadequate dwelling is a feature of homelessness.

#### Areas of divergent thinking

##### *Scope of the subgroup*

Divergent views on the scope of the definition subgroup's were expressed by some members, particularly around the process for progressing the definition work in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context, and in the review of the cultural definition.

##### *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homelessness definition work*

Some members of the HSRG and the Definition Subgroup noted that the definition work should include analysis of issues pertinent to Indigenous populations. They stated that this work should not be undertaken separately as the ABS Homelessness definition should reflect and encompass Indigenous understanding of experiences of homelessness.

Others, including ABS, noted that the specified timelines for completion of the first phase of the definition work would not allow for the necessary consultation and review of the relevant literature to ensure that the Indigenous context had been adequately represented. Work has commenced on considering homelessness in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context, and a subgroup will be formed to progress this work.

##### *The cultural definition of homelessness*



A minority of members were of the view that the discussion of an official ABS statistical definition of homelessness should be confined to reviewing, refining and updating the cultural definition developed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie. These members argued that widening the scope of the discussion was unnecessary and unproductive given the widespread and long-standing use and acceptance of this definition in Australian homelessness policy and in the service sector, and its demonstrated capacity to be operationalised in the Census estimates of homelessness. They noted, for example, that the cultural definition could be refined to encompass severe overcrowding as a state that falls below cultural understandings of a minimum level of accommodation adequacy, as could 'choice' in terms of what the community accepts as not only minimum but 'normal' in modern society in a variety of situations that the sector and other people would not regard as homelessness. Violence and safety more generally, as well as dwelling adequacy in the context of new forms of accommodation, could also be explored.

The majority including the ABS, were of the view, as per the terms of reference of the group (see Appendix 2), that key international and national definitions must be considered to demonstrate that a rigorous, evidence informed, process had been undertaken to develop the conceptual framework /definition with core elements underpinning it. They noted that the purpose of the group was to advise on the conceptual elements of a definition that could be operationalised across a range of ABS datasets, not just using the Census of Population and Housing. It was also noted by ABS and some members that there has been no empirical validation of the Chamberlain and MacKenzie cultural definition in terms of its assumptions about a minimum shared community standard. Moreover views have evolved over the past 20 years or so, suggesting that this standard is historically contingent.

Some members saw merit in the 'community standard' concept being tested in a nationally representative way, either through extensive focus group work or through survey activity (perhaps as part of a deprivation survey or similar measurement exercise).

The ABS agreed that the cultural definition could be modified to address the conceptual elements of a broader definition of homelessness. However, it was not clear to the ABS that refreshing the cultural definition added anything to the conceptual underpinnings of homelessness measurement that is not delivered directly by the development of a conceptual definition alone. A revamped cultural definition would require constant revisiting as the world changed, because without the conceptual underpinnings being established on which to assess the homeless state, new and emerging living situations could not be readily classified.

Consensus was not reached on this issue. However, the subgroup agreed to proceed according to its terms of reference by identifying the elements in the key national and international definitions, and examine the basis for homelessness identification and categorisation in a large list of living situations.

### ***Accommodation alternatives (including choice)***

The issue of access to accommodation alternatives (including choice) was the subject of extensive debate and some divergent opinion among members of the group.

The notion of accommodation alternatives was included in the ABS proposal for a definition to recognise that some people have the experience of living somewhere which they would not call 'home' for a period of time, as part of the many life transitions that people both pursue and experience. If those people could have accessed alternative suitable accommodation, but they choose not to in order to pursue their own life goals, they are unlikely to be considered by most people as being homeless. Some submissions on the definition, including from a service peak body, supported particular examples where a living situation might have been classified as homeless under some interpretations of a cultural definition of homelessness, but which the submission proposed should be excluded from the ABS definition of homelessness.

An example of people who might first appear homeless under some criteria but actually have accommodation alternatives, are young Australians travelling in their gap year with no usual address while staying in a variety of short term accommodation circumstances. Other examples include the large numbers of Australians that move for a variety of purposes (jobs, education, tree / sea change) and may not have a 'usual address' established in a new location at a particular point in time (i.e. still looking around before buying or signing a long term lease). Owner builders may have temporary accommodation arrangements that may appear to be 'homeless' for a time under some aspects of the elements of the ABS definition and other definitions. Incorrectly attributing homelessness to these groups could skew both policy and resource allocations and put at risk public concern about the social issue of homelessness and its implication for social exclusion.

The group noted that the idea of lack of accommodation alternatives and choice is not new in homelessness definitions. It is reflected in the SAAP definition, and in the Statistics New Zealand definition (where it is described as 'options to acquire safe and secure private accommodation').

Most of the subgroup members agreed in principle that the idea of accommodation alternatives or choice is an essential consideration in defining someone as homeless. While most members agreed it was easy to conceptualise the issue of choice, many members noted that it is difficult to measure and operationalise the concept of accommodation alternatives or choice in Censuses and, to a less extent, in surveys. It can be difficult to create an operational boundary between having access to financial, physical, psychological and personal resources and not having access to these resources. Some members, for example, advised that an exact definition of accommodation alternatives would be required in the definition and that the definition would need to incorporate a specific and detailed standard (for example having lack of assets or income, physical health or psychological capacity that would prevent someone from accessing safe and secure living arrangements). Others cautioned against a too prescriptive application of this aspect of access to alternatives.

Most subgroup members agreed on many of the aspects of accommodation alternatives (or choice) that should be excluded from a measure of homelessness. Some members considered that this aspect of the definition should be addressed through an explicit list of exclusions rather than through the overarching consideration proposed in the ABS definition.

Some discussion centred on the complete absence of accommodation alternatives in particular locations regardless of the personal resources of individuals in that location (e.g. mining towns or roadside construction). According to the ABS definition, if people chose to move from a location where accommodation choices were available to a location for, say, significant personal benefit, the person would not be classified as homeless. On the other hand, people with no accommodation alternatives in one location who move to another and remain without accommodation alternatives are homeless if so assessed against the key elements of the definition applied to their current circumstance.

The ABS view is that the concept of accommodation alternatives should be addressed in the **conceptual** definition, and that in the operationalisation of the concept that the risks of error (in both directions) in particular measurement contexts should be clear. Some members put the view that an alternative approach is to exclude the 'accommodation alternatives/choice' element from the concept but in operationalisation to provide sufficient detail to allow users to exclude components of 'homelessness' that are not relevant to the particular purpose for which the statistics are being used.

All subgroup members advised the ABS to produce estimates of the magnitude of under and over estimation which may occur in regard to its operationalisation, and a list compiled of the inclusions in, and exclusions from, homelessness measures that arises from the application of this overarching dimension in particular measurement contexts.

### ***Personal safety***

The ETHOS typology of homelessness and housing exclusion includes an operational category for people living under the threat of domestic violence. Subgroup member views differed on whether personal safety should be conceptualised as homelessness or at risk of homelessness. All agreed that domestic violence is a significant cause of homelessness and that personal safety is a concern for people who are subject to, or fleeing domestic and family violence.

Some members considered that a person living under threat of domestic and family violence does not have control of space, privacy, safety, or the capacity to pursue social relations and they are socially excluded. As such they are housed but not "homed" and without accommodation alternatives. Some suggested that there is in fact a potential double standard in relation to this group especially when compared with those living in boarding houses. If people living in boarding houses are classified as homeless, in part, for reasons of safety, lack of privacy and personal discomfort and fear then so too should people living in violent households. Some also asked why people living in unsafe dwellings that are structurally unsound are considered homeless because they are in a living arrangement that is not safe or secure, however those living in unsafe dwellings because of the threat and reality of violence are not homeless although their living arrangement is also not safe nor secure?

Others argued that people in these circumstances who are living in an adequate dwelling with security of tenure are better understood as "at risk of homelessness". In effect these members gave greater weight to the accommodation (security of tenure, adequacy) rather than the social amenity components of the ABS definition (some of these members even favoured a definition without the social amenity component).

Some members were hesitant to include personal safety in a definition of homelessness because domestic and family violence is a broader social problem, and double labelling it as homelessness might narrow the issue to just a housing issue and dilute its profile as a social issue in its own right. However members generally agreed that homelessness was broader than a housing issue (i.e. it is not just rooflessness) and double badging the plight of victims of domestic and family violence as both a safety issue and either a homelessness issue or a precarious housing issue should not dilute the focus for policy (and other) action. Similar issues apply with mental health.

All members agreed that when a person escaped domestic violence, a return to that unsafe dwelling did not constitute an accommodation alternative.

### ***Other views on the definition***

Other views on the definition included severe crowding and the security of tenure element.

#### ***Severe crowding***

The homelessness definition that ABS proposed to the subgroup and HSRG categorised severe overcrowding as an example of the third element - a lack of control of, and access to space for social relations, and being without accommodation alternatives. In extremely overcrowded dwellings inhabitants are generally unable to pursue social relations, or to have personal (i.e. family or small group) living space, or to maintain privacy and/or personal safety (safe from violence including domestic violence), nor do different family / groups within the dwelling have exclusive access to kitchen facilities and a bathroom. The ETHOS typology characterises 'extreme' over-crowding as homelessness within the category of inadequate housing.

Subgroup members agreed with the characterisation of severe or extreme crowding as both a lack of social amenity and inadequate housing that potentially also places tenure at risk. Discussion focused on the operationalisation of the concept i.e. where to draw the line between crowding (and potentially "at risk of homelessness") and the more severe end defined as homelessness. Some members wanted further information about the ABS analysis of 2006 Census data in relation to 3 or more extra bedrooms needed and 4 or more extra bedrooms needed (as determined by the standardised measure of overcrowding, the Canadian National Occupancy Standard). Members sought to analyse the information to determine at

what level of the standard crowding measure the line should be drawn at extreme or severe crowding that warranted classification as homelessness.

The definition paper presented by ABS struck the somewhat conservative boundary at 4 or more extra bedrooms needed when using Census data. The **Information Paper - Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing** (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001) provides further information about the boundary issues in overcrowding and its implications for homelessness measurement when using Census data.

#### Security of tenure element

All members agreed that no tenure, and lack of security of tenure, constitutes homelessness when coupled with no accommodation alternatives.

Subgroup discussion of the security of tenure element focused on the homelessness status of specific living situations, particularly transitional housing, and community and private boarding houses. The subgroup noted that tenure arrangements in transitional housing vary across, and sometimes within, states and territories. Some transitional housing models offer, in effect, security of tenure for a fixed, often medium term period (12 months or more), whereas others provide 3 month tenancies or less. Some members of the subgroup generally concluded that transitional housing that is stable, and is the pathway to long term housing, does not represent homelessness. While a legal requirement may exist for the issuing of 60 day notices to quit when a tenant first occupies the dwelling, when the intention and the practice is for much longer tenancy (usually until formal longer term arrangements are in place) then both security and stability of tenure are achieved.

A similar conclusion was reached on tenure in community run boarding houses.

However, while in some jurisdictions the minimum tenure in private boarding houses is 60 days, and the period for a notice to quit is 120 days, the subgroup did not consider this routinely delivered stability of tenure in all cases. Other members noted that, in some jurisdictions, promoting boarding house reform as a component of the solution to homelessness might be hindered by a definition that classified a type of dwelling as representing homelessness.

While the conceptual elements of the homelessness definition should be applied regardless of the particular terminology that might be used to describe a person's accommodation situation, the way in which the definition is operationalised in regard to tenure, may overstate or understate the extent of a person's lack of security, depending on the information that has actually been collected. The more information that is collected regarding tenure, the more likely a person would be classified correctly.

#### **Other issues**

ABS intends to publish, along side its estimates of homelessness, estimates for other aspects of marginal housing that fall just outside the definition of homelessness. For example, while the ABS definition of homelessness can be applied to people living in caravan parks - the conceptual elements would form the basis of classification - there is interest in marginal housing that is just outside the definition of homelessness, including for people living long term in caravan parks.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## Future directions

[Contents >> Future directions](#)

### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

This section contains the following subsection :  
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

[Contents >> Future directions >> FUTURE DIRECTIONS](#)

### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

The first phase of the ABS development of a definition of homelessness did not address any specific cultural aspects of a definition relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conceptualisations of, or experiences with homelessness. The ABS has commenced a second phase of definition work relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts and experiences of homelessness. The results of this definitional work will be released in 2013.

Relevant future ABS data collections will be refined to align, as far as is practical in each case, with the ABS definition. For each data source, the parts of the definition that have been able to be operationalised will be made clear. The operationalisation of the ABS definition using the Census of Population and Housing is outlined in **Information Paper - Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing** (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001).

The ABS program of homelessness statistics will expand the information about both people who are currently homeless, people who have previously experienced homelessness, and people who may be at risk of homelessness, as well as presenting a longitudinal views of homelessness. The forthcoming ABS publication **Information Paper: Guide to Homelessness Statistics** (cat. no. 4923.0), due for release in November 2012, will outline the different sources of homelessness information, how they relate to the ABS definition now and into the future, and how the different information resources can be used together to analyse and better understand homelessness in Australia.

Some of the key ABS datasets for understanding homelessness are outlined below.

## Census

As noted, the ABS will shortly release data on homelessness from the 2001 and 2006 Census (11 September 2012) and on 12 November 2012 results from the 2011 Census will be released. These estimates will be published in the publication **Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness** (cat. no. 2049.0).

ABS will investigate using its 5% sample of the Australian population captured in its Statistical Longitudinal Census Dataset (SLCD) to undertake longitudinal analysis of the circumstances of those who have been classified as likely to be homeless on Census night. The circumstances of people classified as likely to be homeless in 2011 can then be compared with their circumstances in 2006, and vice versa to look at both antecedents for and situations after an episode of homelessness. Into the future it should be possible to report on aspects of repeat periods of homelessness and long term outcomes as seen in the SLCD, compared with the rest of the population. Further information on the SLCD can be found in **Census Data Enhancement Project: An Update, Oct 2010** (cat. no. 2062.0).

Some options for improving both enumeration and estimation in future Censuses have been discussed in the ABS Position Paper (2011b). Another aspect of potential future improvement in homelessness estimation from the Census will be the possible inclusion of new content around, for example, health status, so that the homeless population can be compared with the rest of the population. A longitudinal view through Censuses may therefore be able to be studied in terms of both the pathways into homelessness arising from social factors, and its consequences for other outcomes in later life. The ABS will consider these issues as it progresses the development of the 2016 Census.

## ABS Household Surveys

ABS has so far included a module on past periods of homelessness in two surveys, from which a picture of the incidence of homeless can be derived, as well as trends in the homelessness over time, at least for those who have transitioned out of homelessness at the time of interview. The homelessness module has been run in the 2010 General Social Survey and is being run in the 2012 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. The module will be improved for use in the 2014 General Social Survey and, once adjusted for cultural appropriateness, will be considered for the next National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey. The ABS has also collected information in the 2012 Personal Safety Survey about where people go when they leave a violent partner, and future developments may expand this information set for later cycles of the survey.

Guided by its Homelessness Statistics Reference Group, the ABS is continuing to undertake research and development to improve the estimation of homelessness, including youth homelessness. In particular, the ABS has been undertaking a quality study to inform the potential development of a nationally representative homeless school students survey.

[Previous Page](#)

# Explanatory Notes

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## Glossary

### GLOSSARY

#### Age

Refers to a person's age at last birthday. These data are collected for each person. Age is calculated from date of birth, however if this is not provided, stated age is used. If neither is provided age is imputed.

#### Australia

Australia is defined in the **Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC)**. It includes the states and territories and the other territories of Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Jervis Bay Territory, but excludes Norfolk Island and the other Australian external territories of Australian Antarctic Territory, Heard and McDonald Islands, Ashmore and Cartier Islands and Coral Sea Territory. Prior to 1996, Census tabulations excluded Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands from the Australian total but the counts were available separately.

#### Australian born

Australian born includes all people born in Australia and excludes people

- born at sea
- whose response was classified 'Inadequately described, or
- whose response was classified 'Not elsewhere classified'.

#### Australian Citizenship

Refers to people who state they have Australian Citizenship.

## Australian Census Analytic Program (ACAP)

This program provides researchers with access to unpublished Census data. The objectives of this program were to publish important, and previously unrevealed information incorporating 2006 Census and other data by:

- assisting and encouraging issue-driven research; and
- increasing the use of Census data.

ACAP provides Australian researchers with an opportunity to contribute to the growth and development of Australia by advancing contemporary understanding of Australia's social, cultural and economic environment.

## Australian Standard Geographical Classification

The **Australian Standard Geographical Classification** (ASGC) was developed by the ABS for the collection and dissemination of geographic statistics. It is a hierarchically structured classification with a number of spatial units to satisfy different statistical purposes.

The ASGC areas used for the Census are

- Mesh Block (MB)
- Collection District (CD)
- Statistical Local Area (SLA)
- Local Government Area (LGA)
- Remoteness Area (RA)
- Statistical Subdivision (SSD)
- Statistical Division (SD)
- Statistical District (S Dist)
- Statistical Region (SR)
- Major Statistical Region (MSR)
- Urban Centre/Locality (UC/L)
- Section of State (SOS)
- State/Territory.

See also:

**Statistical Geography Volume 1: Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) 2006** (cat. no. 1216.0)

**Statistical Geography Volume 2: Census Geographic Areas, Australia** (cat. no. 2905.0)

**Statistical Geography Volume 3: Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) Urban Centres/Localities** (cat. no. 2909.0)

## Average

See Mean.

## Birthplace

See Country of birth.

## Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS)

The Canadian National Occupancy Standard for housing appropriateness is sensitive to both household size and composition. The measure assesses the bedroom requirements of a household by specifying that

- there should be no more than two persons per bedroom
- children less than 5 years of age of different sexes may reasonably share a bedroom
- children 5 years of age or older of opposite sex should have separate bedrooms
- children less than 18 years of age and of the same sex may reasonably share a bedroom, and
- single household members 18 years or over should have a separate bedroom, as should parents or couples.

Households living in dwellings where this standard cannot be met are considered to be overcrowded.

## Caravans, houseboats, cabins etc.

Enumeration of people in caravans, houseboats, cabins etc. varies depending on their situation. Occupied caravans are usually treated as private dwellings with the exception of some caravans on residential allotments (see below).

**Caravans on Residential Allotments:** An occupied caravan on a residential allotment is usually treated as an occupied private dwelling. The exception to this is where there are one or more other structures on the allotment and the occupants of the caravan live and eat with the occupants of the main dwelling. In this case the occupants are all classed as one household and the caravan is counted as an additional room of the main dwelling.

**Caravans on Roadsides/Open Land:** Prior to the 2006 Census, occupied caravans at roadside parking areas or on open land were classified as sleepers-out. The occupants of the caravans complete Household forms.

For the 2006 Census, caravans on roadsides/open land are treated the same as caravans in caravan parks. That is, they are treated as occupied private dwellings and families are identified and coded.

**Caravans or Cabins in Caravan Parks:** Since the 1986 Census, occupied caravans or cabins in caravan parks have been treated as occupied private dwellings, i.e. families are identified and coded. Prior to this, they were treated as non-private dwellings.

**Houseboats:** Occupied houseboats are treated as occupied private dwellings regardless of location. Prior to the 1986 Census, occupied craft in marinas were treated as non-private dwellings.

Managers' residences in caravan parks or marinas are enumerated and classified as separate private dwellings. Unoccupied caravans and boats/craft, regardless of location, are not counted in the Census.

## Census

The Australian Census of Population and Housing is an official count of population and dwellings, and collects details of age, sex, and other characteristics of that population. For more information see **How Australia Takes a Census** (cat. no. 2903.0) and the information paper **2006 Census of Population and Housing, Nature and Content** (cat. no. 2008.0). These papers are also available on the ABS web site <<https://www.abs.gov.au>>.

## Census counts

The Census counts people where they were located on Census Night and this count of the population is referred to as the place of enumeration count. A count of the population based on their place of usual residence is also available. While every effort is made to achieve a complete Census count, some under enumeration inevitably occurs for various reasons, for example, the inadvertent omission of very young children, treatment of some dwellings as unoccupied when in fact they are occupied, and failure to find all dwellings. Refusal by householders to complete the Census form is not a significant cause of under enumeration.

## Child

This is a person of any age who is a natural, adopted, step, foster or nominal son or daughter of a couple or lone parent, usually resident in the same household. A child is also any individual under 15, usually resident in the household, who forms a parent-child relationship with another member of the household. This includes otherwise related children less than 15 years of age and unrelated children less than 15 years of age. In order to be classified as a child, the person can have no identified partner or child of his/her own usually resident in the household. A separate family in the household is formed in this instance. If a person is aged under 15 and has a partner and/or a spouse these relationships are not recorded.

## Child under 15

This is a person who has been classified as a child of another household member and who is aged under 15 years. A person who is classified as a child under 15 is considered to be a dependent child.

## Collection District

The Census Collection District (CD) is the second smallest geographic area defined in the **Australian Standard Geographical Classification** (ASGC). For the 2006 Census, CDs serve as the basic building block in the ASGC and are used for the aggregation of statistics to larger Census geographic areas, including Statistical Local Area (SLA).

For the 2006 Census, there is an average of about 225 dwellings in each CD. In rural areas, the number of dwellings per CD generally declines as population densities decrease. CDs are defined for each Census and are current only at Census time. For the 2006 Census, there are about 38,200 CDs throughout Australia (this includes the other territories of Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Jervis Bay). For more information see **Census Dictionary, 2006** (cat. no. 2901.0).

## Core activity need for assistance

Measure introduced in the 2006 Census of Population and Housing to determine the number of people with a profound or severe disability. For the Census, people with a profound or severe disability are defined as those people needing help or assistance in one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care, mobility and communication, because of a disability, long term health condition (lasting six months or more) or old age.

## Counting unit

The basic counting unit for homelessness estimation is the person. This counting unit provides for the richness of their personal characteristics (including relationships with others) for analysis as well and by their living situation.

## Country of birth

The Census records a person's country of birth. For the 2001 and 2006 Censuses, the **Standard Australian Classification**

**of Countries** (SACC) is used to classify responses for country of birth of person. This classification uses the current names of countries, so if a person uses a former name, the current name is coded. For example, Siam would be coded to Thailand.

### **Couple family**

A couple family is identified by the existence of a couple relationship. A couple relationship is defined as two people usually residing in the same household who share a social, economic and emotional bond usually associated with marriage and who consider their relationship to be a marriage or marriage-like union. This relationship is identified by the presence of a registered marriage or de facto marriage. A couple family can be with or without children, and may or may not include other related individuals.

### **Data quality**

Each stage of the Census is subject to stringent quality assurance procedures which result in data of high quality. However, in a Census there are recognised sources of error and some of these may survive in the data produced. Potential sources of error in the Census are: under enumeration, respondent error, processing error and introduced random error. Introduced random error is used to protect the confidentiality of individuals. The effect of such errors on overall Census results is generally insignificant and does not impair the usefulness of Census data.

### **Domestic violence**

Violence by any member of the person's household (eg partners, parents, siblings, children, housemates, & other household members).

### **Dwelling**

In general terms, a dwelling is a structure which is intended to have people live in it, and which is habitable on Census Night. Some examples of dwellings are houses, motels, flats, caravans, prisons, tents, humpies and houseboats. Private dwellings are enumerated using household forms, which obtain family and relationship data.

Non-private dwellings (hotels, hospitals etc.) are enumerated on individual personal forms.

All occupied dwellings are counted in the Census. Unoccupied private dwellings are also counted with the exception of unoccupied dwellings in caravan parks, marinas and manufactured home estates. Unoccupied residences of owners, managers or caretakers of such establishments are counted. And for the 2006 Census, unoccupied units in retirement villages (self-contained) are also counted.

### **Dwelling Location**

Dwelling Location applies to private dwellings, and describes the location of dwellings other than 'typical' private dwellings. The majority of private dwellings will appear in the 'Other' category.

### **Dwelling Structure**

Dwelling structure classifies the structure of private dwellings enumerated in the Census. The information is determined by the Census collector.

The broad categories are

**Separate house:** This is a house which stands alone in its own grounds separated from other dwellings by at least half a metre. A separate house may have a flat attached to it, such as a granny flat or converted garage (the flat is categorised under Flat, unit or apartment - see below). The number of storeys of separate houses is not recorded

Also included in this category are occupied accommodation units in manufactured home estates which are identified as separate houses.

**Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse, etc:** These dwellings have their own private grounds and no other dwelling above or below them.

**Flat, unit or apartment:** This category includes all dwellings in blocks of flats, units or apartments. These dwellings do not have their own private grounds and usually share a common entrance foyer or stairwell. This category also includes flats attached to houses such as granny flats, and houses converted into two or more flats.

**Caravan, cabin, houseboat:** This category includes all occupied caravans, cabins and houseboats regardless of location. It also includes occupied campervans, mobile houses and small boats. Separate houses in caravan/residential parks or marinas occupied by managers are not included in this category.

**Improvised home, tent, sleepers-out:** This category includes sheds, tents, humpies and other improvised dwellings, occupied on Census Night. It also includes people sleeping on park benches or in other 'rough' accommodation.

**House or flat attached to a shop, office, etc.:** A house or flat attached to a shop, office, factory or any other non-residential structure is included in this category.



## Dwelling Type

Dwelling type classifies all dwellings into the basic dwelling types. The categories are:

**Occupied Private Dwelling:** An occupied private dwelling is a private dwelling occupied by one or more people.

A private dwelling is normally a house, flat, or even a room. It can also be a caravan, houseboat, tent, or a house attached to an office, or rooms above a shop.

Occupied dwellings in caravan/residential parks are treated as occupied private dwellings.

Occupied dwellings in manufactured home estates and units in retirement villages (self-contained) were classified as occupied private dwellings since the 1996 Census.

**Unoccupied Private Dwellings:** These are structures built specifically for living purposes which are habitable, but unoccupied on Census Night. Vacant houses, holiday homes, huts and cabins (other than seasonal workers' quarters) are counted as unoccupied dwellings. Also included are newly completed dwellings not yet occupied, dwellings which are vacant because they are due for demolition or repair, and dwellings to let.

Unoccupied private dwellings in caravan/residential parks, marinas and manufactured home estates are not counted in the Census. The exception to the above are residences of owners, managers or caretakers of the establishment and for the 2006 Census, unoccupied residences in retirement villages (self-contained).

**Non-Private Dwellings (NPDs):** NPDs are those dwellings, not included above, that provide a communal or transitory type of accommodation.

NPDs include hotels, motels, guest houses, prisons, religious and charitable institutions, boarding schools, defence establishments, hospitals and other communal dwellings.

People in NPDs are enumerated on personal forms and so information on their family structure is not available. In the case of accommodation for the retired or aged, where the one establishment contains both self-contained units and units that are not self-contained, then both household forms (self-contained) and personal forms (not self-contained) are used as appropriate.

**Migratory:** People enumerated on an overnight journey by plane, train or bus cannot be allocated a dwelling type. This category exists for processing purposes only.

**Off-Shore:** This includes dwellings such as off-shore oil rigs, drilling platforms and the like. Prior to the 2006 Census, it also included people enumerated aboard ships in Australian waters.

**Shipping:** This dwelling type is for people enumerated aboard ships in Australian waters. For the 2001 and earlier Censuses, they were included in the 'Offshore' category.

## Education

**See** Level of Highest Educational Attainment.

### Educational qualification

Every Census since 1911 has included a question in which respondents reported their highest level of educational achievement. In the 1966 Census, respondents were asked to provide details of the qualification title and the institution at which it was obtained. In all Censuses since 1966, people aged 15 years and over have been asked whether they had obtained a qualification and, if so, the qualification name and field of study. The 1971 Census also asked whether the person was currently studying for a qualification and, if so, its name. Prior to 2001, this information was restricted to post-school educational qualifications. From 2001, the information includes all qualifications (both school and post-school) and the level and field of the highest qualification.

Qualifications data are used to assess the skill level of the labour force, and potential labour force, and are valuable for the planning and implementation of labour force training programs.

## Employed

**See** Labour force status.

## Enumeration

**See** Place of enumeration, Place of usual residence.

## Estimated Resident population of Australia

The Estimated Resident Population (ERP) is the official measure of the Australian population, and is based on the concept of usual residence. It refers to all people, regardless of nationality or citizenship, who usually live in Australia, with the exception of foreign diplomatic personnel and their families. The ERP includes usual residents who are overseas for less

than 12 months and excludes overseas visitors who are in Australia for less than 12 months.

### **European typology of homelessness (ETHOS)**

The European typology of homelessness and housing exclusion (ETHOS) currently defines homelessness as being without a 'home'. Having a 'home' can be understood as: having an adequate dwelling (or space) over which a person and his/her family can exercise exclusive possession (physical domain); being able to maintain privacy and enjoy relations (social domain) and having a legal title to occupation (legal domain).

ETHOS classifies homelessness people into four broad conceptual categories:

- **rooflessness:** without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough
- **houselessness:** with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelter
- **living in insecure housing:** threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence
- **living in inadequate housing:** in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding.

### **Family**

A family is defined by the ABS as two or more persons, one of whom is at least 15 years of age, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who are usually resident in the same household.

Each separately identified couple relationship, lone parent-child relationship or other blood relationship forms the basis of a family. Some households contain more than one family.

Visiting families are not included as part of the household, and the relationships of other visitors are not coded. A household containing only a visiting family (e.g. a family at a holiday home) is coded to a household type of visitors only.

Where all persons present are aged under 15 years, or where information for each person has been imputed, the household is deemed not classifiable to a family. Of people listed as temporarily absent, only spouse(s) and family children are used in coding family composition.

### **Family Type**

Families are classified in terms of the relationships that exist between a single family reference person and each other member of that family. The Family Type variable distinguishes between different types of families based on the presence or absence of couple relationships, parent-child relationships, child dependency relationships or other blood relationships, in that order of preference. Family type is derived from people enumerated in the household who usually reside there, and who share a familial relationship. Partners and dependent children usually present but temporarily absent are also included in this derivation.

Note: There is no provision for 'other related individuals' in second and third families. If more than three families are found in a household, only three families are separately classified and any other people are classified as either related family members or non-family members as appropriate.

**See also** Family.

### **Family violence**

Violence against a person by any family member (eg sibling, resident and non-resident family members).

### **Flow measures of homelessness**

Flow measure is an estimate of the number of people experiencing at least one period of homelessness over a given period of time, for example, over a 12 month period.

**See** Incidence measures of homelessness.

### **Full/Part-Time Student status**

The Census records the full/part-time status of students.

### **General Social Survey (GSS)**

The General Social Survey aims to collect data for persons aged 18 years and over on a range of social dimensions from the same individual to enable analysis of the interrelationships in social circumstances and outcomes, including the exploration of multiple advantage and disadvantage experienced in Australia.

### **Grey Nomads**

Grey nomads are defined as people in dwellings where all people in the dwelling were aged 55 years and over, were not in the labour force, and were staying in caravans, cabins or houseboats on Census night, and reported having no usual address. The majority of these grey nomads were enumerated in holiday destinations including the northern beaches in NSW, and in Queensland, NT and northern WA.

## Group household

The ABS defines a group household as a household consisting of two or more unrelated people where all persons are aged 15 years and over. There are no reported couple relationships, parent-child relationships or other blood relationships in these households.

An unrelated child (e.g. boarder) under the age of 15 who lives in a household with one or more usual residents, is coded as forming a parent-child relationship within that household. These households become family households, not group households.

## Highest Year of School Completed

The Census records the highest level of primary or secondary school a person has completed. Highest year of school completed is classified to the **Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED)**.

This classification has changed since the 2001 Census. In 2001 it included a category 'Still at school'. The 'Still at school' category is excluded from the 2006 classification. This allows the level of highest educational attainment to be determined for people still at school.

## Homelessness

In accordance with the ABS statistical definition, when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate, or
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable, or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

**See Information Paper: A Statistical Definition of Homelessness** (cat. no. 4922.0).

## Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG)

Advisory group to the ABS on the development, collection, compilation, production and dissemination of robust statistics for the use in analysing, understanding and reporting on homelessness in Australia.

## Hours Worked

The Census records the number of hours worked in all jobs held during the week before Census Night, by employed people aged 15 years and over. This excludes any time off but includes any overtime or extra time worked. Hours worked, when used in combination with Labour Force Status, provides information on full-time and part-time employment. For Census purposes, a person is considered to be working full-time if they worked 35 hours or more in all jobs during the week prior to Census Night.

## Houseboat

Occupied houseboats have been classified as occupied private dwellings since the 1986 Census, and therefore receive household forms. Unoccupied houseboats are not counted.

## Household

A household is defined as one or more persons, at least one of whom is at least 15 years of age, usually resident in the same private dwelling. Under this definition, all occupants of a dwelling form a household and complete one form. Therefore, for Census purposes, the total number of households is equal to the total number of occupied private dwellings as a Census form is completed for each household from which dwelling information for the household is obtained.

## Household Composition

The Census records the type of household within a dwelling. Household composition indicates whether a family is present or not and whether or not other unrelated household members are present.

A maximum of three families can be coded to a household. Lone person households can contain visitors. Visitor only households can contain overseas visitors.

## Household form

The household form is the primary means for collecting Census data and is used in all private dwellings. A personal form records person characteristics in cases where a household form is not appropriate. If there are more than six people in a household on Census Night, a personal form is completed for the seventh person, and any subsequent persons.

## Household Income

This variable is the sum of the individual incomes of each resident present in the household on Census Night. If any resident

aged 15 years and over is temporarily absent, or does not state their income, then household income is not derived for that household.

In most cases, the income of visitors to a household is excluded from the calculation of household income. The exception to this is households that comprise only visitors. Household income is calculated for these households in order to collect data on household income in tourist areas.

The 2006 Census collected individual income in ranges, so before these could be summed to a household level a specific dollar amount needed to be imputed for each person. Median incomes for each range, derived using data from the 2003-04 Survey of Income and Housing, were used for the purpose of compiling household income measures.

This method, which imputes personal income values within reported individual income ranges, was selected as the best practical approximation that would result in the majority of households being included in the same Census household income range that would have been derived had individuals reported their incomes in dollar amounts rather than in ranges. The approximations are expected to generally support analyses looking at various other characteristics of both persons and households in terms of broad household income ranges.

The imputation used in deriving household income is likely to understate some household incomes, specifically lower household incomes in general but particularly for single income households. Single income households with lower income levels are most affected by the imputation methodology understating their incomes. For example, for single parent family households with the parent under 45 years of age, analysis shows that nearly twice as many such households were likely to be allocated to the low income range of \$250 to \$349 per week than would have been the case had incomes been reported in dollar amounts (with fewer than expected households in higher income ranges). Similarly for sole person households where the resident is aged 65 years and over, analysis shows the number of households that were likely to be allocated to the low income range of \$250 to \$349 per week was about 15% higher than would have been the case had incomes been reported in dollar amounts.

A more general issue with individual income reporting in the Census is that studies have shown individuals tend to understate their incomes compared with the amounts that would be reported in surveys designed specifically to measure income.

For the above reasons, care should be exercised in any use of Census household income information, which relies on the imputed values. Similar care should be taken when using 2001 Census data.

## **Household Type**

**See** Household Composition.

## **Hours worked in all jobs last week**

Records the number of hours worked in all jobs held during the week before Census Night, by employed people aged 15 years and over. This excludes any time off but includes any overtime or extra time worked.

## **Housing Loan Repayments (monthly)**

Housing loan repayments are those which are being paid by a household to purchase the dwelling in which it was enumerated (also applicable to caravans). The Census collects this information in single dollars up to \$9,999. However, for practical purposes this information is recoded to a specific number of ranges.

## **Improved dwelling**

**See** Dwelling, Dwelling Structure.

## **Imputation**

Imputation is a statistical process for predicting values where no response was provided to a question and a response could not be derived.

Where no Census form is returned, the number of males and females in 'non-contact' private dwellings may be imputed. In addition, the following key demographic variables may also be imputed, if they are 'Not stated':

- Age
- Place of Usual Residence
- Registered Marital Status.

The imputation method used for the 2006 Census is known as 'hotdecking'. In general this method involves locating a donor record and copying the relevant responses to the record requiring imputation. The donor record will have similar characteristics and must also have the required variable(s) stated. In addition the donor record will be located geographically as close as possible to the location of the record to be imputed. The match must occur within the same Capital City or Balance of State. When a suitable match is found, then the copying of the response(s) from the donor record to the variable(s) that have missing values can occur.

The methodology for imputation is tailored to two situations. Firstly, where no Census form has been returned and secondly

where a partially completed form was returned.

**No Census form returned - private dwelling:** Where a Census collector has identified that a private dwelling was occupied on Census Night but a Census form was not returned, the number of males and females normally in the dwelling and their key demographic variables may require imputation. In these cases, the non-demographic variables are set to 'Not stated' or 'Not applicable'.

The 'No Census form returned' scenario has two variations. Firstly, where no form was returned but the collector was able to ascertain the number of males and females from a resident of the dwelling, or in a small number of cases a building manager or neighbour. And secondly, where no form was returned and the number of males and females remains unknown.

For records where the number of males and females is unknown, two imputation processes are required. Initially these records must have their number of males and females imputed using hotdecking. Then a second imputation (also using hotdecking) is run to impute the key demographic variables.

To hotdeck the number of males and females, the donor records must meet several conditions:

- They must be records where no Census form was returned but where the number of males and females was ascertained by the collector;
- They must have a similar Dwelling Structure to the record to be imputed;
- They must be located geographically as close as possible to the location of the record to be imputed.

The number of males and females are the only data copied from the donor record in the first hotdecking process.

In the next process, the records which have just had their number of males and females imputed, are subjected to the same hotdecking process as those records where the number of males and females had been ascertained.

This hotdecking process imputes the key demographic variables. Again the donor records must meet several conditions:

- They must be records where everyone within the dwelling provided all their demographic characteristics;
- They must have similar Dwelling Structure and Dwelling Location;
- They must have identical counts of males and females;
- They must be located geographically as close as possible to the location of the record to be imputed.

The key demographic variables are then copied from the donor records to the records requiring imputation.

The method of imputing the counts of males and females in previous Censuses was to use the average number of males and females in responding private dwellings for that Collection District. This method was discovered to have over-imputed the 2001 Census male and female counts.

**No Census form returned - non private dwelling:** Where a person in a non-private dwelling did not return a form, their demographic characteristics are copied from another person in a similar non-private dwelling using Type of Non-Private Dwelling.

**Census form returned:** Where a form was returned, some or all of the demographic characteristics may require imputation. If Registered Marital Status and/or Place of Usual Residence are 'Not stated' they are imputed using hotdecking, whereas Age is imputed based on distributions obtained from previous Censuses. Registered Marital Status imputation is carried out by finding a similar person in a similar responding dwelling based on the variables:

- Sex
- Relationship in Private Dwelling
- Age
- Dwelling Type
- Type of Non-Private Dwelling.

Registered Marital Status is only imputed for persons aged 15 years and over, and set to 'Not applicable' for persons aged under 15 years.

Where a complete usual address on Census Night is not provided, the information that is provided is used to impute an appropriate CD (and SLA). A similar person in a similar dwelling is located and missing usual residence fields are copied to the imputed variable.

These are based on the variables:

- Residential Status in a Non-Private Dwelling
- Dwelling Location
- Type of Non-Private Dwelling.

Where date of birth or age details are incomplete or missing, the variable Age is imputed based on distributions for particular populations (for example, male or female; marital status and state/territory of usual residence). Factors affecting age imputation include any reported labour force activity, educational institution attending and other family member relationships

and ages.

### **Incidence measures of homelessness**

Estimates the number of people experiencing at least one period of homelessness over a given period of time, for example, over a 12 month period (also known as flow measures). They may include multiple incidences of homelessness for some individuals.

### **Income**

Each Census respondent aged 15 years and over is asked to indicate the range within which their gross income from all sources lies (rather than their exact income).

Gross income includes wages, salaries, overtime, business or farm income (less operating expenses), rents received, dividends, interest, superannuation, maintenance (child support), workers' compensation, and government pensions and allowances (including all payments for family assistance, labour market assistance, youth and student support, and support for the aged, carers and people with a disability).

As income from most sources is reported before deduction of expenses incurred in the earning of the income, these incomes are always a positive figure. However, income from some sources may be negative. Income from own unincorporated enterprise and income from rental property are collected net of expenses incurred in the raising of income, so may be negative. This may result in a negative total income.

While there is a tendency for incomes to be slightly understated in the Census, the distribution is largely consistent with that obtained from the ABS income surveys. Therefore, Census income data is useful as an indicator of relative advantage or disadvantage and economic well being.

Testing of the topic has shown that there is a general tendency for those not in the labour force to leave this question unanswered, as they consider income only applies to payments received as a result of employment. Similarly, pensioners and self funded retirees sometimes state that they receive no income as they do not regard their pension as income.

### **Indigenous personal form**

**See** Interviewer household form.

### **Indigenous special enumeration strategy**

The ABS has implemented procedures tailored to the enumeration of Indigenous people living in discrete communities since the 1976 Census.

Central to the 2006 strategy was the role undertaken by the State Indigenous Manager (SIM). The SIM laid the groundwork for a successful enumeration by working with Indigenous groups and media to encourage participation. The SIM also coordinated the enumeration activities which affected Indigenous peoples.

The SIM in each state and territory was supported by the Indigenous Engagement Manager (IEM). IEMs are ongoing ABS staff members employed to implement the ABS' Indigenous Community Engagement Strategy, and have responsibility for liaising with Indigenous communities and organisations and advising the ABS on enumeration issues relating to Indigenous people. IEMs also facilitate the return of ABS data to Indigenous communities and organisations in a culturally appropriate manner. In some states the IEM will take on the role of the SIM.

As in the past, Census Field Officers are employed to work with Indigenous communities to ensure they are counted in the Census. This includes gaining community acceptance for the Census and the recruitment of local field staff.

In certain Indigenous communities, an interview form designed to be appropriate to Indigenous culture is used. This part of the strategy is used in discrete communities where communities indicate the need due to the cultural or language situation. In these cases Census Field Officers recruit, train and work with people from the community so that they can manage the enumeration and conduct the interviews.

In other areas, Indigenous peoples are enumerated using standard procedures and forms. Special collectors skilled in Indigenous languages and culture are available to assist in these areas if required.

### **Indigenous Status**

The question about Indigenous origins on the Census form asks whether each person is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Torres Strait Islanders are the descendants of the Indigenous people of the Torres Strait, between the tip of Cape York and Papua New Guinea.

### **Individual Income**

Individual incomes are collected as ranges in the Census. To enable these range values to be summed, information from the Survey of Income and Housing, which collects income as individual values, is used to estimate the median income within each bracket collected by the Census. The relevant median value for each family/household member is then summed to produce family or household income.

## Industry of employment

Industry of employment describes the industries in which employed people aged 15 years and over work. The **Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification** (ANZSIC) is used in classifying the responses given to the industry questions for the 2006 Census.

## Interviewer household form

The interviewer household form is used in nominated discrete Indigenous communities (communities of Indigenous people in which language differences or other factors make use of the standard self-enumeration forms impractical). The interviewer household form is an interview based Census form which is used to record the details of up to 12 persons in a household, and some dwelling data. If there are more than 12 persons in a dwelling a second interviewer household form is used to record the details of subsequent persons.

## Introduced random error

Under the **Census and Statistics Act 1905** it is an offence to release any information collected under the Act that is likely to enable identification of any particular individual or organisation. Introduced random error is used to ensure that no data are released which could risk the identification of individuals in the statistics.

Care has been taken in the tables which are presented to minimise the risk of identifying individuals. In addition, a technique has been applied to randomly adjust cell values. Random adjustment of the data is considered to be the most satisfactory technique for avoiding the release of identifiable Census data. The technique has been applied and all cells are slightly adjusted to prevent any identifiable data being exposed. These adjustments result in small introduced random errors. However the information value of the table as a whole is not impaired.

It is not possible to determine which individual figures have been affected by random error adjustments, but the small variance which may be associated with derived totals can, for the most part, be ignored.

## Labour force

For Census purposes, the labour force includes people aged 15 years and over who work for payment or profit, or as an unpaid helper in a family business, during the week prior to Census Night; have a job from which they are on leave or otherwise temporarily absent; are on strike or stood down temporarily; or do not have a job but are actively looking for work and available to start work.

Persons classified as being in the labour force as those employed (i.e. the first three groups above); and unemployed people (i.e. the last group above).

People aged 15 years and over who are neither employed nor unemployed are classified as not in the labour force. This includes people who are retired, pensioners and people engaged solely in home duties.

## Labour force status

In the Census the Labour force status variable is derived for all people aged 15 years and over. It classifies people as employed working full-time, part-time or away from work, unemployed looking for full-time work, looking for part-time work, or not in the labour force. The category 'Employed, away from work' also includes persons who stated they worked but who did not state the number of hours worked.

## Landlord Type

The Census provides information on the type of landlord for rented dwellings. It applies to all households who are renting the dwelling (including caravans, etc. in caravan parks) in which they are enumerated on Census Night.

## Level of Highest Educational Attainment

Records the highest educational achievement a person aged 15 years and over has attained. It lists qualifications and other educational attainments regardless of the particular field of study or the type of institution in which the study was undertaken.

## Location of dwelling

See Dwelling location.

## Lone parent

A lone parent is a person who has no spouse or partner usually resident in the household, but who forms a parent-child relationship with at least one child usually resident in the household. The child may be either dependent or non-dependent.

## Lone person household

Any private dwelling in which there is only one usual resident at least 15 years of age, is classified as being a lone person household.

## **Marina**

**See** Caravans, houseboats, cabins etc.

## **Mean**

The mean is calculated by summing the values of all observations in a set of data and then dividing by the number of observations in the set. Thus: mean = sum of all the observed values / number of observations.

## **Median**

The median is the value that divides a set of data exactly in half. It is the middle value when the values in a set of data are arranged in order. If there is no middle value (i.e. there are an even number of values) then the median is calculated by determining the mean of the two middle values. Thus: median = the middle value of a set of data.

## **New migrants**

A person who has arrived in Australia in the Census year who has been in the country no more than 7 months (ie in the Census year).

## **Non-dependent child**

A person aged 15 years or more, who is a natural, adopted, step, or foster child of a couple or lone parent usually resident in the same household, who is not a full-time student aged 15-24 years, and who has no identified partner or child of his/her own usually resident in the household.

## **Non-private dwelling**

**See** Type of Non-Private Dwelling.

## **Non-school Qualification: Level of education**

Level of education is defined as the field of study of the highest completed non-school qualification.

## **Not in the labour force**

Persons not in the labour force are those persons who, during the week prior to Census Night, were neither employed nor unemployed. They include persons who were keeping house (unpaid), retired, voluntarily inactive, permanently unable to work, in gaol, trainee teachers, members of contemplative religious orders, and persons whose only activity during the week prior to Census Night was jury service or unpaid voluntary work for a charitable organisation.

## **Number of Bedrooms in Private Dwelling**

Measures the number of bedrooms in each occupied private dwelling, including caravans in caravan parks.

## **Occupation**

Occupation is collected in the Census for all employed people aged 15 years and over. Two questions are used in the Census: 'In the main job held last week, what was the person's occupation - Give full title', and 'What are the main tasks that the person usually performs in the occupation...'

Collecting both occupation title and task information ensures more accurate coding of occupations. The 2006 Census uses the **Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations** (ANZSCO). For more information see **Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations** (cat. no. 1220.0). The **Australian Standard Classification of Occupations** (ASCO) Second Edition was used in the 2001 Census.

## **Occupied private dwelling**

**See** Dwelling.

## **Older persons travelling on Census night**

Includes persons in dwellings where all persons in the dwelling were aged 55 years and over, were not in the labour force, and were staying in a caravan, cabin or houseboat, who reported having a usual address elsewhere on Census night.

## **Overcrowding**

Households living in dwellings requiring extra bedrooms according to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS).

**See also** Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS).

## **Over estimation**



In the context of estimating homelessness over estimation occurs when persons who are represented in the underlying data set are misclassified as homeless when they are not.

**See** also Under-enumeration, Underestimation.

### **Overseas visitor**

**See** Visitors to Australia

### **Partner**

A person identified as being in a couple relationship with another person usually resident in the same household is a partner. The couple relationship is established through reporting of either a registered or de facto marriage, and includes same-sex couples.

### **Partner violence**

Any incident of sexual assault, threatened sexual assault, physical assault or threatened or attempted physical assault by a current and/or previous partner.

### **Personal form**

The Census personal form records details for one person only. It contains the same questions as the household form, but excludes the household questions. The personal form is used

- for households with more than six people: the household form accommodates six people, so one personal form is completed for each extra person,
- for privacy: if any person in a household prefers, for privacy reasons, not to be recorded on the household form, then a personal form and a privacy envelope are issued for that person, and
- in non-private dwellings: one personal form is completed for each person in a non-private dwelling on Census Night.

### **Personal Safety Survey (PSS)**

The Personal Safety Survey aims to collect information about men's and women's experience of physical or sexual assault or threat by male and female perpetrators. Experiences of the different types of violence, since the age of 15, by different types of male and female perpetrators (including current partner, previous partner, boyfriend/girlfriend or date, other known man or women, and stranger) is explored. More detailed information, such as where the incident occurred and what action was taken, can be obtained for most recent incidents of each of the different types of violence by a male and female perpetrator. Additional information is also collected about respondents experience of current and previous partner violence such as frequency and fears of violence, incidents of stalking and other forms of harassment and general feelings of safety.

### **Place of birth**

**See** Country of birth.

### **Place of enumeration**

The place of enumeration is the place at which the person is counted i.e. where he/she spent Census Night, which may not be where he/she usually lives.

### **Place of usual residence**

This is the place where a person usually lives. It may, or may not be the place where the person was counted on Census Night.

### **Place of usual residence five years ago**

Place of usual residence five years ago identifies a person's place of usual residence five years before the Census.

### **Population**

Census count of persons based on their reported place of usual residence.

### **Post enumeration survey (PES)**

A measure of the undercount in the Census is obtained from a sample survey of households undertaken shortly after the Census, called the Post Enumeration Survey. It collects information about where people were on Census Night and their characteristics, which are compared to the actual Census forms. The Post Enumeration Survey found an undercount of 1.8% in the 2001 Census, 2.7% in the 2006 Census and 1.7% in the 2011 Census.

The PES is only conducted in private dwellings therefore it cannot be used to estimate the undercount of homeless people on Census night.

## **Prevalence measure of homelessness**

Measure estimating how many people experience homelessness at one point in time, on Census night (also known as point-in-time estimate). A prevalence estimate should ensure that each person is included only once in the estimate if they were homeless at a particular point in time.

## **Private dwelling**

See Dwelling.

## **Proficiency in Spoken English**

Proficiency in spoken English refers to persons who speak a language other than English at home, who report their self assessed proficiency in spoken English. It should be regarded as an indicator of a person's ability to speak English rather than a definitive measure of his/her ability and should be interpreted with care.

## **Registered marital status**

Registered Marital Status reports responses to the question 'What is the person's present marital status?' and refers to the legal status of the person, and not necessarily his/her current living arrangement. The partners in a registered marriage must be of the opposite sex as same-sex relationships cannot be registered as marriages in Australia. Marital status is applicable to people aged 15 years and over.

## **Relationship in Household**

This variable describes the relationship of each person in a family to the family reference person or, where a person is not part of a family, that person's relationship to the household reference person.

Children who are usually resident in the household are classified as dependent if they form a parent child relationship and are either 0-14 years of age; or they are 15-24 years of age and also a full-time student (in secondary or tertiary education). Children who are aged 15-24 years who are not full-time students and children aged 25 years and over are classified as non-dependent children. Children who are aged 25 years and over with a child or partner of his/her own, or who are full-time students aged 15-24 years of age with a child or partner of his/her own, are classified according to that relationship.

## **Remoteness area**

Within the **Australian Standard Geographical Classification** (ASGC), the Remoteness classification comprises five categories, each of which identifies a (non-contiguous) region in Australia being a grouping of Collection Districts (CDs) sharing a particular degree of remoteness. The degrees of remoteness range from 'highly accessible' (i.e. major cities) to 'very remote'.

## **Rent (weekly)**

The Census records the individual dollar amounts of rent paid by households on a weekly basis for the dwelling in which they were enumerated on Census Night. This includes caravans etc. in caravan parks. The categories range from \$0-\$9,999 in single dollar amounts.

## **Residence**

See Dwelling, Household, Usual residence.

## **Residential Status in a Non-Private Dwelling**

The Census records whether people enumerated in non-private dwellings (such as motels, hospitals, colleges etc.) are staying there as either: members of staff of the accommodation (e.g. owner, proprietor, porter, cook, teacher, warden, family of owner or family of staff); or residents, guests, patients, inmates, etc.

No information on family relationships is available for people in non-private dwellings because they are enumerated using personal forms.

## **SAAP**

See Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.

## **Scope and coverage**

The 2006 Census of Population and Housing aims to count every person who spent Census Night, 8 August 2006, in Australia. This includes people in the six states, the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory, Jervis Bay Territory, and the external territories of Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The other Australian external territories (Norfolk Island, and minor islands such as Heard and McDonald Islands), are outside the scope of the Australian Census.

People who leave Australia but who are not required to undertake migration formalities, for example those on oil and gas

rings off the Australian coast, and expeditioners to the Australian Antarctic Territory (and other locations) are also included in the Census. They are coded to Off-Shore Collection Districts.

All private dwellings, except diplomatic dwellings, are included in the Census, whether occupied or unoccupied. Caravans in caravan parks and manufactured homes in manufactured home estates, are counted only if occupied. For the 2006 Census, unoccupied residences in retirement villages (self-contained) are included. In previous Censuses they were excluded. Occupied non-private dwellings, such as hospitals, prisons, hotels, etc. are also included.

For more detail see **Census Dictionary, 2006** (cat. no. 2901.0).

### **Self-enumeration**

Self-enumeration is the term used to describe the way Census data are collected. The Census forms are generally completed by householders (or individuals in non-private dwellings) rather than by interviewers, although interviewers are available in some areas if required.

### **Sex**

The sex of each person enumerated in the Census is recorded as being either male or female.

### **SLA**

**See** Statistical Local Area.

### **Sleepers-out**

**See** Dwelling Structure.

### **Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas - Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSd)**

The Index of relative socio-economic disadvantage is a general socio-economic index that summarises a wide range of information about the economic and social resources of people and households within an area. Because this index focuses on disadvantage, only measures of relative disadvantage are included. This means that a high score (or decile) reflects a relative lack of disadvantage rather than relative advantage.

This index summarises 17 different measures, such as low income, low education, high unemployment and unskilled occupations. A low score indicates relatively greater disadvantage in general. For example, an area could have a low score if there are (among other things) many households with low income, many people with no qualifications, or many people in low skilled occupations.

A high score indicates a relative lack of disadvantage in general. For example, an area may have a high score if there are (among other things) few households with low incomes, few people with no qualifications or in low skilled occupations.

### **Stock measures**

**See** Prevalence measures of homelessness.

### **South Sea Islander**

Australian South Sea Islanders are the descendants of South Sea Islanders brought to Australia as indentured labour around the turn of the twentieth century and have been identified by legislation as a disadvantaged minority group.

This group excludes later voluntary migrants from the South Pacific region.

### **Specialist Homelessness Services**

As of the 1st of July, 2011, The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (see SAAP) National Data Collection was replaced with the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) collection. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) will compile the data, the first of which will become available in 2012. This Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) data collection will provide data about the pathways people take in and out of homelessness and the kinds of work homelessness agencies do. It will be able to identify individual clients as well as support periods and children will be counted as individual clients. In addition, family information will be more accurate. Information about previous episodes of homelessness and people turned away from homelessness agencies will also be available. The data will be able to provide snapshots of homelessness at a given point in time, which was not previously available with the past datasets.

### **Special Indigenous personal form**

**See** Interviewer household form.

### **Spouse**

**See** Partner.

## State and territory

The State/Territory is the largest spatial unit in the **Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC)**. There are six states and five territories in the ASGC: New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory, Australian Capital Territory, Jervis Bay Territory and the external Territories of Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

Jervis Bay Territory, and the Territories of Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands are grouped as one spatial unit at the State/Territory level in the category of Other Territories.

States/Territories consist of one or more Statistical Divisions. In aggregate, they cover Australia without gaps or overlaps.

## Statistical Division (SD)

A Statistical Division (SD) is an **Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC)** defined area which represents a large, general purpose, regional type geographic area. SDs represent relatively homogeneous regions characterised by identifiable social and economic links between the inhabitants and between the economic units within the region, under the unifying influence of one or more major towns or cities. They consist of one or more Statistical Subdivisions (SSDs) and cover, in aggregate, the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps. They do not cross state or territory boundaries and are the largest statistical building blocks of states and territories.

In New South Wales, proclaimed New South Wales Government Regions coincide with SDs except for North Coast, which consists of the SDs of Richmond-Tweed and Mid-North Coast.

In the remaining states and territories, SDs are designed in line with the ASGC general purpose regional spatial unit definition.

For more information and a list of the Statistical Divisions in each state/territory, refer to **Statistical Geography Volume 1: Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) 2006** (cat. no. 1216.0). Maps are available from ABS Information Consultancy.

## Statistical Local Area (SLA)

The Statistical Local Area (SLA) is an **Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC)** defined area which consists of one or more Collection Districts (CDs). SLAs are Local Government Areas (LGAs), or parts thereof. Where there is no incorporated body of local government, SLAs are defined to cover the unincorporated areas. SLAs cover, in aggregate, the whole of Australia without gaps or overlaps.

For more information and a list of the Statistical Local Areas in each state/territory, refer to **Statistical Geography Volume 1: Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) 2006** (cat. no. 1216.0). Maps are available from ABS Information Consultancy.

## Student

See Full/Part-Time student status.

## Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) was established in 1985 to consolidate a number of Commonwealth, State and Territory government programs assisting people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness, including women escaping domestic violence. From the 1st of July, SAAP was replaced with the Specialist Homelessness Services.

The overall aim of SHS is to provide transitional supported accommodation and related support services, in order to help people who are homeless to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence

- to resolve crisis;
- to re-establish family links where appropriate;
- to re-establish a capacity to live independently of SAAP.

The states and territories were responsible for managing the program, while services were provided largely by independent agencies. In 2007-08 approximately 1,550 non government, community or local government organisations were funded nationally under the program. Such organisations ranged from small stand-alone agencies with single outlets to larger auspice bodies with multiple outlets. They provided accommodation and support services to a range of groups including homeless families, singles, young people, and women and children escaping domestic violence.

## Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

The Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) aims to measure the prevalence of disability in Australia and levels of support needed, as well as providing a demographic and socio-economic profile of people with disability and older people (65 years and over) compared with the general population. It also provides information about people who provide care to older people and people with disability.

**Temporarily absent**

The Census form seeks information about people who usually reside in a dwelling but who are temporarily absent on Census Night.

**Tent**

**See** Dwelling Structure.

**Tenure Type**

Tenure type describes whether a household is purchasing, rents or owns, the dwelling in which it was enumerated on Census Night, or whether the household occupies it under another arrangement. Tenure type is derived from the responses to a series of questions. It is applicable to all occupied private dwellings.

**Territory**

**See** Australia, State or Territory.

**Torres Strait Islander people**

People identified as being of Torres Strait Islander origin. May also include people identified as being of both Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal origin.

**Type of Educational Institution Attending**

The Census 2006 records the type of educational institution being attended by people who are full/part-time students. The categories cover pre-school through to tertiary institutions.

**Type of Non-Private Dwelling**

The Census records the type of non-private dwelling in which people were enumerated on Census Night. Non-private dwellings are establishments which provide a communal type of accommodation. Examples of categories are Hotel, motel; Boarding house, private hotel; Public hospital (not psychiatric); and Child care institution.

**Under-enumeration**

Census collectors direct extensive efforts toward locating dwellings and households within districts, however locating them all is sometimes not possible. Some dwellings may not be identified. For example, in commercial areas, flats above or behind shops may be difficult to find. Also, particularly where contact is not made at delivery, flats behind or attached to private dwellings may not be included in the Census. Analysis of the undercount in previous Censuses has shown that people away from their usual residence on Census Night (for example, travelling, camping, staying in a non-private dwelling, or visiting friends) are more likely to be missed than people at home on Census Night.

Even when a household is found, under count is possible if not all members of the household are included on the form (for example, if there are more than six people in the household and no extra forms are obtained) or if the household, or a member of the household, refuses to cooperate and complete a Census form.

A measure of the extent of under enumeration is obtained from the Post Enumeration Survey (PES). The official population estimates produced by the ABS take into account the results of the PES. However, the Census counts are not adjusted. The PES is only conducted in private dwellings therefore it cannot be used to estimate the underenumeration of homeless people on Census night.

**See also** Post Enumeration Survey (PES).

**Under estimation**

The difficulty in isolating unique characteristics of the homeless population within the Census of Population and Housing can result in the misclassification of homeless persons, and subsequent underestimation of the homeless population. The complexity and diversity of persons homeless experiences, and persons not identifying themselves as homeless increases the likelihood of underestimation of homelessness in particular groups, including Youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and people escaping domestic and family violence.

**Unemployed**

**See** Labour force status.

**Unoccupied private dwelling**

**See** Dwelling.

**Usual address**

Usual address information is used to code usual residence.

**See** Usual residence.

### **Usual residence**

Usual residence data provide information on the usually resident population of an area, and on the internal migration patterns at the state and regional levels. The 2006 Census had three questions on usual residence that asked where the person usually lived on Census Night, and where the person usually lived one year ago and five years ago.

Family variables are only derived for people counted at their usual residence. Temporarily absent persons are used to classify types of relationships and families existing in a household, but they are not used in the derivation of any other Census characteristics or in other Census output. If all members of a family are absent from their usual residence, no family records are created for them. Family and household structures are based on persons usually resident. If all members of a family or household are temporarily absent, the family or household is not counted.

### **Visiting friends and relatives**

Homeless operational group used by Chamberlain and MacKenzie in the report **Counting the Homeless, 2006** (cat. no. 2050.0).

### **Visitor only households**

For the purposes of homelessness estimation and estimating marginal housing visitor only households are those dwellings where all persons in the dwelling reported no usual address and there were no usual residents.

**See also** Visitors to a household, Usual residence.

### **Visitors to a household**

Characteristics of individual visitors to a household are available at the household of enumeration. Visitors may also be tabulated according to their CD of usual residence but cannot be placed back to their dwelling of usual residence.

All household and family classifications in the Census are based on the relationships of people usually residing in the household. This applies when there is at least one person aged 15 years and over present. In these classifications, people temporarily absent are included, and visitors are excluded.

The relationship of visitors to one another, or to any resident (including cases where all the people enumerated are visitors) is not further classified.

Households containing only visitors are excluded from household mobility variables.

### **Visitors to Australia**

Question 8 on the Census form, 'Where does the person usually live?' allows the identification of people who are usually resident in another country. These overseas visitors are identified as a separate category for all applicable variables.

### **Voluntary work for an organisation or group**

For Census 2006, the number of people who spent time doing unpaid voluntary work through an organisation or group, in the twelve months prior to Census night was measured. It excludes work done

- as part of paid employment
- if main reason is to qualify for Government benefit
- in a family business.

### **Weekly personal income**

Provides an indicator of the gross income (including pensions and allowances) that persons aged 15 years and over usually receives each week.

### **Year of Arrival in Australia**

The 2006 Census records the year of arrival in Australia for people born overseas who intend staying in Australia for at least one year. For the 2006 Census, the category 'Overseas visitor' consists of those people who report they usually reside in another country.

## **Abbreviations**

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Aus	Australia
CNOS	Canadian National Occupancy Standard
CSA	Census and Statistics Act 19050
FaCSIA	Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
GSS	General Social Survey
IRSD	Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage
NSO	National Statistical Office
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
PES	Census Post Enumeration Survey
PSS	Personal Safety Survey
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SLCD	Statistical Longitudinal Census Dataset
Tas.	Tasmania
THM	Transitional Housing Management
Vic.	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

## Membership of the Homeless Statistics Reference Group Sub-group (Appendix)

### APPENDIX 1 MEMBERSHIP OF THE HOMELESS STATISTICS REFERENCE GROUP SUB-GROUP

#### MEMBERSHIP OF THE HSRG DEFINITION SUB-GROUP

The role of the Definition sub-group of HSRG is to provide recommendations to the HSRG for the development of a definition of homelessness in Australia.

The HSRG will consider the sub-group's recommendations, and utilise them in formulating advice to the ABS.

Dr Shelley Mallett	Handover Welfare Services	Chair
Prof Chris Chamberlain	Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT University	
Assoc Prof David MacKenzie	Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University	
Sarah Kahn	Council to Homeless Persons	
Leon Donovan	Australian Government - Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	
Dr Jill White	Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services	
Mark Bagshaw	South Australian Department for Communities and Social Inclusion	
Geoff Neideck	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare	
Travis Gilbert	Homelessness Australia	
Lindy Edwards	Sera's Women's Shelter/WESNET	Replaced Kedy Kristal April 2012
Zoe Probyn	North West Homelessness Network	

## Terms of reference Definition of homelessness sub-group of Homelessness Statistics (Appendix)

### APPENDIX 2 TERMS OF REFERENCE DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS SUB-GROUP OF HOMELESSNESS STATISTICS

## **ROLE**

The role of the Definition sub-group of HSRG is to provide recommendations to the HSRG for the development of a definition of homelessness.

The HSRG will consider the sub-group's recommendations, and utilise them in formulating its advice to ABS.

The ABS will utilise the advice of HSRG in the development of a statistical definition of homelessness for use in compiling official statistics in Australia.

## **OUTPUT**

A paper outlining the key findings, including the background, issues canvassed and options considered and recommendations to be presented to HSRG.

Sub-group recommendations should include advice on:

- the suitability of Chamberlain and MacKenzie's 'cultural definition'
- its articulation as a statistical definition
- any changes proposed
- any alternative definitions proposed.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Members of the HSRG can elect to join or nominate someone to attend on their behalf to provide expert advice on the development of a definition of homelessness.

## **MODE OF OPERATION**

The definition sub-group is chaired by Dr Shelley Mallett.

The sub-group will communicate via teleconference and email. The sub-group will commence in December 2011 and operate until end February 2012. It will meet as often as required to progress the tasks within the required timeframe. The frequency will be determined by the chair and the sub-group members.

The ABS will provide secretariat support for the definition sub-group (circulating agendas, papers and documenting meeting outcomes). The ABS will cover reasonable teleconference costs for participants of non-government organisations.

The Chair will determine meeting agendas in consultation with sub-group members. Members are invited to suggest agenda items and contribute papers and other material for discussion.

Sub-group meeting papers and minutes will be considered public documents, unless otherwise stated.

# **Definitions (Appendix)**

## **APPENDIX 3 DEFINITIONS**

### **CULTURAL DEFINITION**

Chamberlain and MacKenzie's "cultural definition" identifies assumed shared community standards about the minimum housing that people have the right to expect, in order to live according to the conventions and expectations of a particular culture. The definition identifies those groups that fall below the minimum community standard.

The minimum community standard is a small rental flat - with a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom and an element of security of tenure - because that is the minimum that most people achieve in the private rental market. However, the minimum is significantly below the culturally desired option of an owner-occupied house.

While it is true that the concepts of 'housed' and 'homeless' constitute a continuum of circumstances, there are three situations that fall below the community standard. This leads to the identification of 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary' homelessness and the 'marginally housed'. The model is shown in Figure 1.1 (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 1992, p.291).



FIGURE 1.1 A MODEL OF HOMELESSNESS BASED ON SHARED COMMUNITY STANDARDS EMBODIED IN CURRENT HOUSING PRACTICES

Minimum community standard: equivalent to a small rented flat with a bedroom, living room, kitchen & bathroom

Culturally recognised exceptions: where it is inappropriate to apply the minimum standard, e.g. seminaries, gaols, student halls of residence	Marginally housed: people in housing situations close to the minimum standard
	Tertiary homelessness: people living in single rooms in private boarding houses without their own bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure
	Secondary homelessness: people moving between various forms of temporary shelter including friends, emergency accommodation, youth refuges, hostels and boarding houses
	Primary homelessness: people without conventional accommodation (living on the streets, in deserted buildings, improvised dwellings, under bridges, in parks, etc.)

Source: Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992, p.291.

Primary homelessness accords with the common sense assumption that homelessness is the same as 'rooflessness'. It includes all people without conventional accommodation, such as people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings, or using cars or railway carriages for temporary shelter. Primary homelessness is operationalised using the census category 'improvised homes, tents and sleepers out'.

Secondary homelessness includes people who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. On Census night, it includes all people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation provided under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). The starting point for identifying this group is the Census category 'hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refuges'. Secondary homelessness also includes people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own. They report 'no usual address' on their census form. Secondary homelessness also includes people staying in boarding houses on a short-term basis, operationally defined as 12 weeks or less.

Tertiary homelessness refers to people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis, operationally defined as 13 weeks or longer. Residents of private boarding houses do not have separate bedrooms and living rooms; they do not have kitchen and bathroom facilities of their own; their accommodation is not self-contained; and they do not have security of tenure provided by a lease. They are homeless because their accommodation does not have the characteristics identified in the minimum community standard.

## ETHOS DEFINITION

The European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) defined homelessness as being without a 'home'. Having a 'home' can be understood as: having an adequate dwelling (or space) over which a person and his/her family can exercise exclusive possession (physical domain); being able to maintain privacy and enjoy relations (social domain) and having a legal title to occupation (legal domain).

ETHOS classifies homelessness people into four broad conceptual categories:

- **rooflessness:** without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough
- **houselessness:** with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelter
- **living in insecure housing:** threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence
- **living in inadequate housing:** in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding

These 4 conceptual categories are divided into 13 operational categories to which are mapped 24 living situations as shown below.

		Operational Category		Living Situation	
C o n c e p t u  a  l  C a t e g o r y	R O O F L E S S	1	People Living Rough	1.1	Public Space or External Space
		2	People in Emergency Accommodation	2.1	Night Shelter
	H O U S E L E S S	3	People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1 3.2 3.3	Homeless hostel Temporary Accommodation Transitional supported accommodation
		4	People in Women's Shelter	4.1	Women's Shelter Accommodation
		5	People in accommodation for Immigrants	5.1 5.2	Temporary Accommodation/ Reception Centres Migrant Workers Accommodation
		6	People due to be released from Institutions	6.1 6.2 6.3	Penal Institutions Medical Institutions(*) Children's Institutions/ homes
		7	People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)	7.1 7.2	Residential care for older homeless people Supported accommodation for formerly homeless people
	I N S E C U R E	8	People living in insecure accommodation	8.1 8.2 8.3	Temporarily with family/ friends No legal (sub)tenancy Illegal occupation of land
		9	People living under threat of eviction	9.1 9.2	Legal orders enforced (rented) Re-possession orders (owned)
		10	People living under threat of violence	10.1	Police recorded Incidents
		11	People living in temporary/ non-conventional structures	11.1 11.2 11.3	Mobile homes Non-conventional building Temporary Structure
	I N A D E Q U A T E	12	People living in unfit housing	12.1	Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation
		13	People living in extreme over-crowding	13.1	Highest national norm of overcrowding

(\*) Includes drug rehabilitation institutions, psychiatric hospitals, etc.

## STATISTICS NEW ZEALAND DEFINITION

Statistics NZ used the ETHOS as the basis for their definition of homelessness, with changes to accommodate the NZ environment and conceptual requirements. The definition is based on three domains as follows:

- The **social domain** is being able to pursue normal social relations, have a personal (household) living space, maintain privacy and have safe accommodation.
- The **legal domain** covers having exclusive possession, security of occupation or tenure.
- The **physical domain** is the structural aspect of housing and means having habitable housing.

The intersection of those three domains with housing led Statistics NZ to define homelessness as living situations where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing: are without shelter, in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation with a household or living in uninhabitable housing.

Under the NZ definition people who have 'options to acquire safe and secure private accommodation' are not defined as homeless. This overarching consideration is a corollary for the ABS definition incorporation of accommodation alternatives.

Some of the 'inadequate' and 'insecure' sections of ETHOS are not included because individuals in them are not currently homeless but rather at risk of becoming homeless. These cover the same exclusions for the ABS definition (i.e., ETHOS operational categories 5, 6, and 7). In addition the NZ definition also excludes ETHOS operational categories 9 (threat of eviction) and 10 (living under threat of violence) which are to be covered by the ABS conceptual definition.

## SAAP DEFINITION

When a person is homeless

(1) For the purposes of this Act, a person is homeless if, and only if, he or she has inadequate access to safe and secure housing.

#### Inadequate access to safe and secure housing

- (2) For the purposes of this Act, a person is taken to have inadequate access to safe and secure housing if the only housing to which the person has access:
- a. damages, or is likely to damage, the person's health; or
  - b. threatens the person's safety; or
  - c. marginalises the person through failing to provide access to:
    - i. adequate personal amenities; or
    - ii. the economic and social supports that a home normally affords; or
  - d. places the person in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing.

#### Person living in SAAP accommodation

- (3) For the purposes of this Act, a person is taken to have inadequate access to safe and secure housing if:
- a. the person is living in accommodation provided under SAAP; and
  - b. the assessment of the person's eligibility for that accommodation was based on the application of subsection (1) or (2) (ignoring the effect of this subsection).

#### Generality of subsection (1)

- (4) Subsections (2) and (3) do not limit the generality of subsection (1).

## EXPOSURE DRAFT - HOMELESSNESS BILL 2012

### 3 Object of Act

The object of this Act is to increase recognition and awareness of persons who are, or are at risk of, experiencing homelessness.

### 4 Definitions

In this Act:

**Homelessness:** see section 5.

**Mainstream services** means general services provided by government or non-government agencies that are available to the general population, such as Centrelink, public and community housing, aged care and community health centres.

**Specialist homelessness services** includes services to assist persons who are, or are at risk of, sleeping rough or living in an improvised dwelling.

### 5 Meaning of homelessness

For the purposes of this Act, a person is experiencing **homelessness** if:

- (a) the person is sleeping rough or living in an improvised dwelling; or
- (b) either:
  - (i) the person is temporarily living with friends or relatives and has no other usual address; or
  - (ii) the person is living in accommodation provided by a specialist homelessness service; or
- (c) the person is living in a boarding house, caravan park, hostel, refuge, shelter or similar accommodation, whether on a short-term or long-term basis, in respect of which the person has no secure lease and the person is not living in that accommodation by choice